

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday 16 October 2012

The President (The Hon. Donald Thomas Harwin) took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

The President read the Prayers.

The PRESIDENT: I acknowledge the Gadigal clan of the Eora nation and its elders and thank them for their custodianship of this land.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Enforcement Amendment (R18+ Computer Games) Bill 2012
 Crime Commission Bill 2012
 Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2012
 Industrial Relations Amendment (Industrial Representation) Bill 2012
 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2012
 Transport Administration Amendment (Community Road Safety Fund) Bill 2012

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

CHAIR: I report the receipt of the following message from the Hon. Thomas Frederick Bathurst, Lieutenant-Governor:

Office of the Governor
 Sydney 2000

T Bathurst
 LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

The Honourable Thomas Frederick Bathurst, Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Council that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, having assumed the administration of the Government of the Commonwealth, he assumed the administration of the Government of the State at 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday 2 October 2012.

2 October 2012

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

CHAIR: I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

Office of the Governor
 Sydney 2000

Marie Bashir
 GOVERNOR

Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Council that she re-assumed the administration of the Government of the State at 5.00 p.m. on Thursday 4 October 2012.

4 October 2012

HUMAN TISSUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher.

Motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher agreed to:

That standing orders be suspended to allow the passing of the bill through all its remaining stages during the present or any one sitting of the House.

Second reading set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

BALI TERRORIST ATTACK TENTH ANNIVERSARY

The PRESIDENT: The 12 October 2012 marks the tenth anniversary of the Bali bombings, which resulted in the death of 202 people from 22 countries. Of those killed, 88 were Australians and 43 were from New South Wales. I ask honourable members of the House to stand in their places for one minute to remember the victims of this act of terrorism.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**Report**

The President tabled, pursuant to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, the report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled, "Investigation into the conduct of officers of the Wagonga Local Aboriginal Land Council and others", dated September 2012, received out of session and authorised to be made public on 27 September 2012.

Ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher.

OMBUDSMAN**Report**

The President tabled, pursuant to the Ombudsman Act 1974, the annual report of the Ombudsman for the year ended 30 June 2012, received out of session and authorised to be made public on 15 October 2012.

Ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher.

TABLED PAPERS NOT ORDERED TO BE PRINTED

The Hon. Greg Pearce tabled, pursuant to Standing Order 59, a list of all papers tabled in the previous month and not ordered to be printed.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report**

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps tabled the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 26/55", dated 16 October 2012.

Ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced, pursuant to the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, the receipt of a performance audit report of the Auditor-General entitled, "Monitoring local government: Department of Premier and Cabinet, Division of Local Government", dated September 2012, received out of session and ordered to be printed on 26 September 2012.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AND JUSTICE**Government Response to Report**

The Clerk tabled correspondence from the Leader of the Government advising that the Government's response to report No. 49 of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice entitled "Opportunities to consolidate tribunals in NSW", tabled on 22 March 2012, which was due on 24 September 2012, will be finalised and tabled following careful consideration of stakeholder views.

NIMMIE-CAIRA SYSTEM ENHANCED ENVIRONMENTAL WATER DELIVERY PROJECT**Production of Documents: Dispute of Claim of Privilege**

The PRESIDENT: I report to the House that on 4 October 2012 the Clerk received from the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham written correspondence disputing the validity of a claim of privilege on documents lodged with the Clerk on 20 September 2012 relating to the Nimmie-Caira system enhanced environmental water delivery project. Pursuant to standing orders, a retired Supreme Court judge, Sir Lawrence Street, was appointed as an independent legal arbiter to evaluate and report as to the validity of the claim of privilege. The Clerk has released the disputed documents to Sir Lawrence Street for evaluation and report.

PETITIONS**Religious Discrimination**

Petition supporting the proposition that the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 be amended to include religion as a grounds of discrimination, and requesting that the House support the amendment to the Act to make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of religious belief or absence of religious belief, received from the **Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Routine of Business**

[During the giving of notices of motions.]

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: My point of order relates to the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham's attire. He appears to be wearing a badge that is larger than the standard Legislative Council badge. I draw attention to the rulings of President Burgmann.

Mr David Shoebridge: To the point of order: I think we should be clear about what the Government Whip is objecting to. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham has a lapel pin showing the Aboriginal flag in the shape of a map of Australia. Seriously, is that what the Government Whip is objecting to? The pin is of a modest size but it makes a modest political statement. I ask you to rule against this outrageous point of order.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: To the point of order: Other members of the House routinely wear pins—

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: No, they don't.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, for one, is wearing a pin now. I am not sure what it commemorates—

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: Homicide victims.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: That is completely appropriate.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: It is a ribbon.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: It is a ribbon.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am willing to have members make brief contributions on the point of order. I will not be making my ruling immediately.

The Hon. Catherine Cusack: Point of order: The Greens are putting a construction on the point of order that is a slur on the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps. This is probably the first time the issue has been raised in this Parliament. Clearly, we have rules regarding the wearing of anything in the House, irrespective of whether it is a badge, a T-shirt or whatever. The Government Whip is entirely within his rights to seek clarification on the size of the pin. The matter is complex and has been controversial in the past. For members of The Greens to somehow imply that the point of order is a politically motivated attack on the cause that is depicted on their

badge is disgraceful. Indeed, I ask that it be withdrawn. The Government Whip is entitled, as is any member of the House, to seek clarification. It is a legitimate question. I look forward to your ruling. I ask that The Greens desist from this slur campaign.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I will deal with the Hon. Catherine Cusack's point of order as a separate issue. In relation to the point of order taken by the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, this is the first time that such a point of order has been taken in this Parliament—

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: No, it is not.

The PRESIDENT: It is the first time in this term.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: No, it is not.

The PRESIDENT: It is the first time that such a point of order has been taken while I have been in the Chair. Commemorative ribbons, which are also badges, are bigger than the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham's badge. Rather than ruling immediately on this issue, I will consider the matter and respond later. On the issue raised by the Hon. Catherine Cusack, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps is sitting no more than two or three metres away from me, a similar distance from me as the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. There is absolutely no way I can identify what is on the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham's badge. As Mr David Shoebridge has made an imputation about the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, I call him to order for the first time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Withdrawal of Business

Private Members' Business item No. 936 outside the Order of Precedence withdrawn by Dr John Kaye.

HUMAN TISSUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Second Reading

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY (Parliamentary Secretary) [2.53 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. Michael Gallacher: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Human Tissue Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The bill clarifies a number of processes related to organ donation in New South Wales which—together with various other policies and strategies that this Government will implement—is aimed at increasing rates of organ donation in New South Wales. From 2007 to 2010 there were sustained increases in the rate of organ donation and transplantation in New South Wales and nationally. In 2010, 87 people donated their organs and the rate of donors per million population was 12.5. However, in 2011 New South Wales experienced a decline in both these measures. The 2011 donor per million population rate of 11 was one of the lowest of any Australian jurisdiction. In 2011 there were 77 solid organ donors in New South Wales.

Any decrease in organ donation, however small, can cause devastating consequences for individuals who require a transplant to lead full and healthy lives. Those consequences are also felt by their families. People sometimes die while they are waiting for a suitably matched organ to be found for transplantation. In order to look properly at the reasons for the decrease in organ donation and to canvass strategies aimed at increasing the rates of organ donation, in December 2011 the Government released a discussion paper entitled, "Increasing Organ Donation in New South Wales".

The discussion paper canvassed a range of issues that included whether New South Wales should move to a single national register by closing the Roads and Maritime Services register; whether to switch to an opt-out model of assumed consent to organ donation; the promotion of advanced key directives as a means to indicate consent to organ donation; trialling new models for assisting families to consider donor consent, such as designated requesters and dual advocacy; whether to revoke the practice of allowing family members to refuse organ donation in circumstances where the deceased person has consented to it; strategies to better support and raise awareness among Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse community members; and strategies to further enhance the living donor program, such as better promotion of financial support options.

Seventy-six submissions were received in response to the discussion paper. The majority of submissions were from members of the community. Eleven submissions were received from groups, including

clinical and donation advocacy organisations such as Transplant Australia and ShareLife, the NSW Health Clinical Ethics Advisory Panel, the Medical Services Committee and the Australian Medical Association. Commentary on the proposals was also provided by the Commonwealth through the Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority. After considering the submissions received, the Government released its Increasing Organ Donation NSW: Government Plan 2012, which sets out the Government's plan to increase organ donation rates in New South Wales—a plan that has the full support and backing of the Minister, Jillian Skinner. The plan outlines five key outcomes that the Government will pursue. These are:

Enabling people's intentions regarding organ donation to be known to their family or significant others, and preferably documented and accessible;

Addressing information gaps about organ donation, including addressing myths and misperceptions;

Identifying all opportunities for organ donation in NSW hospitals;

Supporting clinicians in having conversations with donor families that enable fully informed decisions about proceeding with organ donation; and,

Supporting living donor programs.

The Government's plan will include a number of legislative and non-legislative changes to support the Government's goal to increase organ donation. Many of the Government's goals will be pursued at the front line, led by the New South Wales Organ and Tissue Donation Service. Information campaigns will target people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities to explain the benefits of organ donation, clarify any misunderstandings, address concerns, and promote family discussion and registration of consent to organ donation.

Education and training programs will be rolled out for targeted health care workers to enhance their capacity to have effective conversations with families of potential donors and the designated requester model will be trialled in selected New South Wales hospitals. In addition, in order to ensure that the view of an individual on organ donation is recorded and documented appropriately, the Government will move to a single national register of organ donation intent. New South Wales has a stand-alone system for registration of consent to organ donation via the Roads and Maritime Services drivers licence application process. However, other States and Territories discontinued their drivers licence registers in 2003 and moved to the Medicare single organ donor register—the Australian Organ Donor Register [AODR].

The move to recording organ donation intention on a single national register will assist with increasing organ donation rates by providing a focus on one mechanism for recording organ donation consent that is accessible from anywhere in Australia that a potential donor may be being cared for. In addition, a single register will reduce the potential for confusion among community members and clinicians about the best way to record consent to organ donation. Due to the benefits of a single national register, the existing State-based Roads and Maritime Services register will be closed and people in New South Wales who wish to register their organ donation intent will be referred to the Australian Organ Donor Register. The Australian Organ Donor Register will be promoted via the Roads and Maritime Services website, driver licence and vehicle registration renewal letters and community information campaigns. The promotional activity in New South Wales will complement existing initiatives run via Medicare and the Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority.

The Government is also investigating transferring consent data from the Roads and Maritime Services register to the Australian Organ Donor Register. However, it is important that information currently stored on the Roads and Maritime Services register is not lost in the short term. As such, a snapshot will be taken of the Roads and Maritime Services register and all the information on it prior to its closure will continue to be relied upon for five years. This will ensure that the wishes of current licence holders are respected during the transition to the Australian Organ Donor Register. It also needs to be recognised that the snapshot database may not be the most up-to-date information available about an individual's views about organ donation. This is because information on the Roads and Maritime Services register may only represent the views of the individual at the time of their licence application or renewal and the person's views may have changed over time. It is important that people's most recent views with respect to organ donation are considered and upheld. However, the ability of an individual to change their mind with respect to organ donation is dealt with only partially under the Human Tissue Act.

Section 23 of the Human Tissue Act sets out the processes under which a designated officer can authorise the removal of tissue from a deceased person. Under section 23, if a deceased person has given their

written consent, the designated officer can authorise the removal of tissue, but only if the deceased person has not revoked their consent. If the deceased person has revoked their consent, organ donation cannot proceed. However, a person who has not provided written consent to organ donation cannot revoke an initial objection unless donation has been consented to in writing. This is because under section 23, if there is no written consent, the designated officer can only authorise the removal of tissue from a deceased person if the officer is satisfied, among other things, that the person in question had not, during their lifetime, expressed an objection to organ donation. This means that if the deceased person had expressed an objection at one point in their lifetime but had later changed their mind and was in favour of organ donation at the time of their death, a designated officer can authorise the removal of tissue from the deceased.

Clearly, the current provision in section 23 may be inadequate in giving effect to the most recent wishes of the deceased. The bill will address this problem. The bill amends section 23 of the Human Tissue Act to provide that, in circumstances when there is no written consent of the deceased, a designated officer can authorise the removal of tissue from a deceased person who has previously expressed an objection but only when the designated officer is satisfied that, based on the most recent views of the deceased, the deceased person no longer objected to the removal of tissue. Of course, the other requirements in the Act, such as obtaining the senior next of kin's consent, will continue to apply when there is no written consent from the deceased for organ donation.

This is an important amendment in that it will allow, where there is no written consent, the designated officer to consider the most recent views of the deceased with respect to organ donation and not require a designated officer to rely on historical and out-of-date views of the deceased. The bill also makes similar changes to section 24 of the Human Tissue Act, which relates to authorising the removal of tissue when a person dies in a place other than the hospital. In addition, the bill makes similar changes to the Anatomy Act 1977 to ensure that the most recent views of the deceased can be taken into account in determining whether a deceased person's body can be used in an anatomical examination.

Another issue that arises with respect to organ donation occurs when a deceased person has given their written consent but organ donation does not proceed due to family objections. Under the Human Tissue Act if a deceased person has given their written consent to the removal of tissue, a designated officer can authorise the removal of tissue notwithstanding that the deceased's family objects. However, the general practice is that clinicians will not proceed with organ donation against a family's wishes. This is consistent with practice in all other Australian jurisdictions and in comparable international jurisdictions. In New South Wales there are approximately seven to 10 cases per year where the deceased person has consented but the family objects and the donation does not proceed. In those rare cases it appears that the main reason clinicians do not proceed with organ donation is the possibility of causing additional distress to the family at a time when they are already experiencing the grief associated with losing a loved one.

The issue of an effective family right to veto organ donation was canvassed in the discussion paper. Some individual community members who made submissions supported overturning family veto. However, the majority of key organ donation community advocacy organisations and clinical or professional organisations supported the current approach. This was due to concerns that removing organs against a family's wishes had the potential to impact on consent, because individuals may not want their family to be subjected to additional emotional and psychological distress after their death. The consensus view was that education rather than regulation is the most appropriate means of increasing consent to organ donation. The Government supports this approach and will continue to support community information campaigns that promote family discussion of organ donation wishes, including campaigns that support specific culturally and linguistically diverse and religious communities.

NSW Health has found that in situations where the wishes of the deceased person are known and/or recorded families rarely refuse organ donation. This is why the Government wants to educate the community about the importance of family discussion and to educate clinicians so that they have the skills to discuss organ donation with families and to support families to make decisions about it. While there are clear reasons why clinicians do not proceed with organ donation in the face of family objection, it is not clear why families are refusing to comply with the deceased person's wishes. This is due to limited information available to NSW Health as to the reasons a small number of families do not accede to their family member's expressed wishes. This is important information because it would allow NSW Health to review the small number of cases where families do not consent to organ donation despite their family member giving consent. Such information would also allow the Ministry of Health to determine whether any additional processes can be put in place to ensure that, where possible, a deceased person's wishes can be acted upon.

As such, the bill amends the Human Tissue Act to create a new section 27A to allow the Director General of the Ministry of Health to issue guidelines with respect to organ donation to ensure information is recorded setting out the reasons for not proceeding with organ donation where the deceased had given their consent but the family objected. This provision will ensure that clinicians involved in organ donation can adequately document the reasons organ donation did not proceed, notwithstanding that the deceased consented. Such documentation will support analysis of the reasons for family refusal and will assist in developing awareness campaigns that focus on addressing the concerns that lead to family refusal. In addition to the guidelines, the Government will expand specialist training for clinicians in conducting consent conversations and will trial a new model for approaching families for consent. The model will involve specially trained designated requesters who are independent of the treating team. Due to their specialised role and training, the designated requesters will develop the skills and expertise to work appropriately and sensitively with a family when the question of organ donation arises.

Specialised knowledge and skill are also appropriate and necessary when it comes to the removal of tissue. The last amendment in this bill relates to the procedures involved in removing organs and tissue. Under the Human Tissue Act, tissue can be removed after a person has died provided that valid consents and authorities have been obtained. Under section 27, normally once a valid consent and authority have been given to remove the tissue, the authority authorises a medical practitioner to remove the tissue. However, it is not always necessary for a medical practitioner to remove tissue for transplantation purposes. Medical practitioner skills are not necessary to remove tissue for transplantation in a way that maintains the viability of the tissue. Appropriately trained non-medical clinicians can remove tissue. Use of non-medical clinicians is more cost effective and also enables tissue to be retrieved more frequently and in a more timely way because the process is not competing with the clinical service delivery demands on a medical practitioner's time.

Tissue retrieval mostly occurs in a post-mortem setting. For this reason, section 27 (1) (a) currently allows for certain musculoskeletal tissue and corneal tissue to be removed by a person other than a medical practitioner if the person is appointed by the Director General of the Ministry of Health. Persons appointed by the Director General to remove musculoskeletal and corneal tissue are persons specifically trained to remove tissue, and such persons are usually from a nursing, scientific or pathology (mortuary) assistant background. In addition to musculoskeletal and corneal tissue, in certain cases cardiovascular tissue can also be adequately removed from a deceased person by a non-medical practitioner. This occurs when the whole of a heart is not viable for transplantation, but heart valves and other tissue are able to be used to benefit another person.

In order to address this situation, the bill amends section 27 to allow a non-medical practitioner to remove cardiac tissue if the person is appointed by the director general. This amendment will bring the removal of cardiovascular tissue in line with that of musculoskeletal and corneal tissue and ensure a more flexible and effective approach can be utilised to remove cardiovascular tissue, particularly heart valves. The bill is part of an important and key government role in increasing organ donation and will support the vital policy and procedural changes occurring at the community and health service levels in order to increase our rates of organ donation. Organ donation can save and transform lives and should be supported by both this Parliament and the community as a whole. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE [3.11 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Human Tissue Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The New South Wales Opposition strongly supports this bill and its objective to increase the number of organ donations in New South Wales. The bill amends the Human Tissue Act 1983 to extend the opt-in system as far as possible, making the decision to transplant organs on the basis of next-of-kin views and previously expressed wishes of the deceased. The bill also amends the Human Tissue Act, schedule 1, to allow people other than medical practitioners to remove tissue for transplantation. This already occurs, and the amendment extends the practice to musculoskeletal and cardiac tissues. The bill allows for the making of guidelines by the Director General of the Ministry of Health in relation to organ donation, including guidelines relating to the recording of reasons for not proceeding with the removal of tissue from a person in cases where the person has given consent but the family has objected.

In New South Wales, there are approximately seven to 10 cases each year in which a deceased person has consented to organ donation but their family objects and the donation does not proceed. This amendment will allow for information about the reasons for the family's refusal to be collected. This information will be used to increase the effectiveness of awareness campaigns. Many of us in the House have previously ticked the relevant box on our licences and believe that our wishes will be carried out, but it is clear that that does not always happen and that it is why this legislation is so important. Under this legislation, families will be able to object to the wishes of a loved one who has consented to organ donation in the past, which is a sensible

safeguard for families at a time of great grief. Respect for the wishes of the family is vital to the success of encouraging people to register on the Australian Organ Donor Register. It is a sensible move in this legislation. The bill also amends the Anatomy Act 1977 to require that the most recent views expressed by a deceased person are considered in determining whether authority should be given for the anatomical examination of that person's body.

Currently there are some 800 people on the transplant list in New South Wales but last year only 77 of the 215 eligible donors made a donation. As a consequence, tragically many people die while waiting for transplants. The work the Government has done in relation to the discussion paper on increasing organ donation last year and the subsequent plan is welcomed by the New South Wales Opposition. The paper sets out clearly what is needed to increase the level of donation in New South Wales. First, the legislative framework covering organ donation needs to be amended, hence the reason for the bill. This bill brings the mechanics of organ donation and the law governing it into line with world's best practice and also what is occurring in other jurisdictions.

Secondly, the hospital system needs to better facilitate the asking of difficult questions around organ donation. Such questions are asked at the time of the unexpected death of a loved one, when the families are in shock. Hospital staff need to be prepared to sensitively raise the issue of organ donation with grieving family and friends, and to find a way to support and help people make the decision to donate another's organs. Thirdly, we need more community awareness about organ donation. No amount of legislation will increase the rate of organ donation unless everybody in the community sees it as the norm. This is a good start, but the Opposition believes it is only a start and it will continue to be a work in progress.

A key aspect of the plan is the closure of the existing Roads and Maritime Services Organ Donor Register licence organ donor system. Similar systems closed in other States in 2003. Many people in New South Wales today believe they will be organ donors because they have ticked the relevant box on their licence, but find out subsequently that perhaps they will not be. This legislation seeks to tidy up that situation. The snapshot of the current register will be kept for five years, but potential donors will now have to register with the Australian Organ Donation Register. As the Minister noted in the other place, the move to recording organ donation intention on a single national register that is accessible from anywhere in Australia will assist with increasing organ donation rates by providing a focus on one mechanism for recording organ donation consent for potential donors. In addition, a single register will reduce the potential for confusion amongst community members and clinicians regarding the best way to record consent to organ donation.

Under the Roads and Maritime Services Organ Donor Register, people tick the relevant box on their driver licences but family members have no idea as to who wants to be an organ donor. An important aspect of the plan encourages individuals to make their wishes known through conversations with their family. Many of us will have seen the public service advertisements that have been around New South Wales in a variety of locations. They encourage everyone to have the conversation with their family and to let their wishes be known, not just to their next of kin, but to their sons, daughters, aunts and uncles. The discussion about organ donation should occur before death but often is raised only at the time of a tragedy. Even a brief discussion to indicate whether people will be organ donors will make an enormous difference in the event of a tragedy.

The plan will also recommend community education and awareness about organ donation. It is also important to know that around 92 per cent of donors are from Anglo-Saxon backgrounds. There are clearly issues of education, and further discussion needs to take place with culturally and linguistically diverse communities about organ donation, especially in the communities where this practice is not widespread. A lot of work needs to be done. We need to increase community awareness, but we need it to be a discussion. It is not just a matter of translating information into different languages and handing over a pamphlet and hoping that the decision will be made. The discussion needs to be facilitated with community members.

The plan recommends the employment of hospital-based specialists to help families with the difficult decisions about organ donation, and the Opposition welcomes this aspect of the plan. We want to know that the person who is asking about it will not always be the treating specialist. It requires a different skills set for staff to be able to broach these delicate issues with grieving families. We are also pleased to see that the plan includes ways of increasing living donations programs. For many people, the decision to activate a transplant is predicated on being on the waiting list, and knowing that the living donation is part of the treatment also helps with prior planning.

There are many reasons why the New South Wales donor rate of 10.9 donors per one million is so low. The eligible donor pool is reducing and will continue to reduce because of improvements in injury prevention

and medical care, which is why this legislation is so important. If we do nothing, we will be looking at fewer and fewer donors, and more and more potential recipients. The challenge that all members have after this legislation is passed is how we can spread the word that organ donation has to be everyone's business because the rate of potential donation is quite low. Unless a large number of community members are registered as organ donors, many people will die while awaiting a transplant. We have the power to prevent these deaths. The Opposition commends the bill to the House.

Dr JOHN KAYE [3.18 p.m.]: I say from the outset that The Greens enthusiastically support the Human Tissue Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I thank the Minister's office and the Minister of Health for the briefing they gave us—in particular, the remarkably talented Dr Kerry Chant and her equally remarkably talented colleagues in the Ministry of Health who briefed us on this matter and who have been driving a highly progressive change to the organ donation and tissue donation legislation and practice in New South Wales. This is not a partisan issue; it is not contested by any political party. All members would recognise the significance and importance of this issue and we are all striving to achieve the best possible outcome.

This issue has caused some controversy and it can be viewed in different ways. I came to this debate initially with a bias towards the opt-out approach. However, I have been persuaded by the evidence presented to me that there is no clear argument in favour of or against the opt-out approach and that one can take a variety of different approaches. The approach taken by New South Wales and most other States and the Commonwealth is to encourage people to have the discussion with their family. That is eminently sensible and it is likely to produce great results, but we will have to see what happens. The remarkable reality of medical science is that if we were in this Chamber in 1812 rather than 2012—

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: There would be no girls.

Dr JOHN KAYE: No, that is true.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: The Legislative Council first sat in 1824.

Dr JOHN KAYE: There would certainly have been fewer pedants then. Many more of us live a long life now because of advances in medical science. In fact, since 1935, 30,000 people have received lifesaving or life-enhancing organ transplants. Every year around 900 organ transplants occur in Australia. Had those organs not been donated the recipients would have lived an appallingly low quality of life or they would have quickly died. It is therefore important for anyone interested in the health of Australians to promote organ and tissue donation as much as we can.

The first time I obtained a driver licence in New South Wales I ticked the box to indicate that I wanted to be an organ donor and then promptly forgot about it. While I was speaking to Dr Chant this afternoon I had an attack of the guilts that I have never discussed my wish to be a donor with my partner. I think we know one another's wishes, but we should all have that conversation, even if it is inevitable. That is the underlying thrust of this legislation. Donating one's cornea, kidneys, heart, lungs or pancreas to a person whose quality of life is compromised as one departs this mortal coil is an important gesture. I am always impressed by the 1,500 corneal transplants that happen around Australia each year. Members of my family can read and watch television—albeit not very good television—as a result of corneal transplants.

The Hon. Marie Ficarra: Their viewing is not pre-approved by John Kaye.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I do not approve of what they watch, but I approve of their right to watch it. That is a basic principle of democracy. As stated by members of the Government and the Opposition, the problem is that the rate of organs transplanted in New South Wales declined from 287 in 2010 to 242 in 2011. Many reasons are posited for that, and one is that people simply are not having those conversations. This legislation is but one part of the Increasing Organ Donations in NSW: Government Plan 2012, which recommends three fundamental changes to the Human Tissues Act. This amending bill will allow tissues and organs to be removed from a deceased person even if that person has previously opposed organ donation but has subsequently verbally indicated a change of mind. That is sensible. Sometimes when people have a life-threatening illness they contemplate what will happen next and revise their views about how their body should be treated when they die. It is important in those situations that people have the right to change their mind without having to advise the Australian Organ Donor Register. If people have indicated to their family that they have changed their mind their wishes should be respected.

The legislation also gives the director general the power to record the reasons that families objected to organ donation. It appears to be a minor change, but it is crucial. It is important that we have the capacity to collect and analyse that data and to understand why families do not follow their loved one's revised wishes to donate their organs. Many of us have had loved ones die and we understand wanting to hold on. I have had that experience recently and I understand that feeling. However, there is a greater rational desire to do good for others and to recognise that there is a variety of forms of immortality—and one is the gift of a healthy life to someone else when we die. Collecting that information and understanding whether the decision to refuse permission to donate is culturally based or the result of lack of information is important. If it is a result of a lack of information, we must establish how that gap can be addressed. If it is the result of a fundamental religious belief, we should not mess with it. If it is a cultural misunderstanding, there would be room to move. Arriving at that finessed understanding of the reason for refusal even though the deceased or soon-to-be deceased has indicated that they wish to be a donor is an important step forward in increasing the rate of organ donation.

The third change is relatively minor but nonetheless important. The legislation provides that cardio-vascular and musculoskeletal tissue can be removed by someone other than a medical practitioner—that is, people working in mortuaries, scientists and nurses. That is a sensible approach that has worked extremely well with regard to corneal tissue. It is particularly important that such people be able to harvest heart valves. One does not need to be a clinician to remove a heart valve and to prepare it for transplantation. If that amendment is not made we will maintain barriers to that important capacity to transplant human heart valves. The Increasing Organ Donations in NSW: Government Plan 2012 has been well described by the Parliamentary Secretary and the Opposition spokesperson. However, I will put on the record The Greens' support for New South Wales moving to the Australian Organ Donor Register, which will be run by Medicare. That is a sensible collocation because Medicare knows us as medical beings.

The transition plans that were described of taking the existing Roads and Maritime Services database as a snapshot and holding it in the department until the Australian Organ Donor Register is up and running is sensible. There are sufficient legislative privacy protection provisions to ensure that there is no real risk of an individual's information being misused. Central to the plan is the information campaign about organ donation and the targeting of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, although, of course, we will all be targeted. We must break down the barriers that cause misunderstanding and create an environment in which those conversations can occur. I encourage all members to read "Increasing Organ Donation NSW: Government Plan 2012", which outlines a number of measures to enable people to discuss their intention regarding organ tissue donation with their families and significant others. The plan states:

Streamlining to a single national organ donor register; reinforcing current national key measures; encouraging healthy adults to consider and discuss their organ donation wishes ...

People should consider and discuss both their organ donation wishes and the medical treatment they wish to receive at the end of their lives. The plan continues:

... addressing the information gaps about organ donation, including addressing myths and misperceptions.

When considering this issue, we might contemplate our attitude to our medical institutions. When I first ticked "yes" to organ donation, I remember thinking, with a moment of guilt, "Have I signed my own death warrant? Will my organ be harvested?"

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: Purely in self-interest.

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is self-interest. I dismissed that thought immediately, but all of us have a tiny degree of scepticism about large institutions. One of the tasks ahead of us is to have a statewide and national conversation to dismiss the notion that we increase our chance of dying early by signing up to organ donation. Having seen organ harvesting and the medical safeguards around it, I know it is absolutely true that every hospital in New South Wales, and I presume in Australia, has excellent protocols to ensure that does not occur.

I want to address the issue of the opt-in or opt-out system. I came to this debate partly driven by the discussion paper of the Western Australian Department of Health, tabled in May 2012 in the Parliament of Western Australia, which recommended the adoption of the opt-out system, with the goal of lifting the rate of organ donation. The discussion paper pointed to Belgium, Spain, Austria and Sweden. In Belgium, three years after the opt-out system had been adopted, donation rates rose from 11 people per million to 22 people per million. The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps will tell us that correlation is not necessarily causation.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Absolutely.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And because two things happen at the same time that does not necessarily mean one caused the other. I will not give an example.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: I can provide an example: anthropogenic global warming.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You probably can. I am persuaded by the argument that many factors contribute to a personal decision to sign up to an organ donor register and to families saying "no" even though the deceased previously said "yes." It is far more complex than the simplistic opt-in or opt-out system. I have not given up on the opt-out system because it has merit, but there is not the evidence base to support that drastic move. I am not shy of drastic moves, but only when they have a solid evidence base to support them. In this particular case there are too many confounders and data points that at this stage do not give one the level of confidence to move to the opt-out system.

The New South Wales Government should reserve its decision and eventually, with the support of the Parliament and on the advice of the Ministry of Health which is well thought out and supported by the evidence base, we should go down that path and give it our best shot. I foreshadow that The Greens will move amendments that a formal evaluation be conducted. I say that knowing full well that the Health ministry at both State and Federal levels will regularly review this issue. I do not doubt that competent, professional and expert eyes will be focused on the process of these changes. However, we should keep a weather eye on it and require a report—I first considered in two years but I am now persuaded in five years—to be made to this Parliament relating to this issue.

Many lives are at stake. Organ donation gives people an opportunity to feel better about themselves and their loved ones when they die. The appropriate legislation is good for everyone: the organ donor, the deceased's family and the recipient of the donated organs and tissues. We must ensure greater participation rates in organ and tissue donation in order to raise transplant rates and to decrease the extraordinarily high number of people, particularly those with renal problems, on transplant waiting lists. We must address the transplant waiting list as quickly as we can. The rate of organ donation still remains a dependent variable that is not well understood; the drivers need to be better understood. The data collected as a result of this legislation will improve our understanding of the social mechanisms. I congratulate the Government on introducing this legislation. I particularly thank the Ministry of Health, Dr Kerry Chant and the Minister's office for the information and time they have generously given to us. I commend the legislation to the House.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR [3.36 p.m.]: I support the Human Tissue Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I do so with enthusiasm because any measure that encourages the donation of organs within this State must be commended. Only last month many of us spoke to the motion moved by the Hon. Melinda Pavey in relation to DonateLife Week. An expo was held, following which competitors from the Australian Transplant Games visited Parliament House. As a result of those events, I filled in the paperwork to be enrolled on the Australian Organ Donation Register, the papers for which I received yesterday from Medicare. The papers provided another prompt for me to have the relevant conversation with my family.

I, like others, had merely ticked the box on my driver licence and had spoken to my wife about organ donation some time ago. But having been put on the Australian Organ Donation Register, my wife and I had another conversation about the matter yesterday and she is fully aware of my views. The amendments to sections 23 and 24 of the Human Tissue Act 1983 take into consideration the most recent views of the deceased person in relation to organ donation. It is usually under tragic circumstances that family have to make this serious decision about their loved ones. A recent case is that of Thomas Kelly, an 18-year-old who was king hit in Kings Cross and lost his life. One good thing that came out of his death was the donation of his organs, which made such a difference to many other lives within New South Wales. A few years ago Doujon Zammit was also king hit while holidaying in the Greek Isles and, again, his family made the decision to donate his organs. These conversations usually occur at the worst possible time and any initiatives and legislative measures that encourage us to have a conversation with our families and to make a conscious decision in relation to organ donation are to be commended.

I will briefly touch on the amendments to section 27, which allow non-medical practitioners appointed by the director general to remove cardiovascular tissue, specifically heart valves. The removal of valves from a heart unsuitable for transplant makes a huge difference to the lives of others. The amendments to the Anatomy Act 1977 will also allow donated body parts to be used for scientific purposes. The use of donated body parts is vital to the training of doctors, physiotherapists and technicians and will assist them greatly in their studies. I wholeheartedly support the legislation. Any measure that makes organ donation easier in New South Wales is

to be commended. I thank the Minister for Health for the discussion paper and for these proposed amendments to the legislation. I thank also the Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon. Melinda Pavey, for her work in raising the profile of organ donation within New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. WALT SECORD [3.40 p.m.]: The Human Tissue Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 will help people with end-stage disease such as kidney, liver, heart, lung or pancreas failure. It will also help people waiting to receive tissue donations, such as bone, corneas or skin, to improve their quality of their life and, in some cases, save them. Almost 1,600 Australians are on the national transplant waiting list. On 5 September, the Minister for Health, Mrs Jillian Skinner, in her second reading speech, said that the proposed amendments in this bill will increase the New South Wales organ donation rate. For that reason I support the bill.

The O'Farrell Government has set itself an ambitious target to double the rate of organ donation in New South Wales. It wants to bring New South Wales into line with international jurisdictions. Currently, 36 per cent of families in New South Wales agree to donation if a loved one is a suitable donor. The Government wants to lift that donation rate to 70 per cent. I support that goal and I sincerely hope it achieves that target. However, as the Minister for Health advised, Spain and Croatia took about 10 years to shift community views on organ donation and to meet their respective targets. The Minister for Health also advised that in the three-year period from 2007 to 2010 organ donation in Australia increased, as did the need for organ donations. In 2010, 87 people donated their organs in New South Wales with some 700 people on a waiting list for waiting for transplantation—12.5 donors for every one million New South Wales residents. Disappointingly, in 2011 there was a decline in these numbers. In New South Wales the 2011 donor rate dropped to 11 out of every one million, compared with South Australia which had 21.1 donors—almost double the rate in New South Wales.

In 2011, there were 77 solid organ donors from the total New South Wales population—77 from a possible 215 potential organ donors who were deemed to be medically suitable to donate. Unfortunately, New South Wales has one of the lowest donation rates in Australia. On a positive note, for the past five years John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle—because of its specialist and sensitive staff training—has topped the State as the hospital with the best organ donation rate. Further, for the past 40 years the world-class transplant units at St Vincent's, Westmead and Royal Prince Alfred hospitals have saved the lives of hundreds of Australians. Since 1965, more than 30,000 Australians have received life-saving or life-preserving organ transplants. Each year more than 900 organ transplant operations and many more tissue transplants or grafts, including about 1,500 corneal transplants, are performed.

Despite the obvious benefits of organ donation, it is important to understand why donation rates have fallen. First, there has been a reduction in preventable deaths such as car accidents or sporting injuries. This positive development has also meant there are fewer potential healthy donors. Importantly, fewer family members are giving consent for the organs of loved ones to be considered for donation. This is having a significant impact on the ability of our world-class doctors and hardworking nurses to save and improve lives. That is another reason I support this bill.

The Human Tissue Legislation Amendment Bill is no ordinary bill. It is unlike the various miscellaneous bills we consider from time to time in this Chamber to tidy up loopholes, anomalies or drafting errors. This bill is wide-ranging and sweeping. It allows the State to obey and enforce the expressed wishes of a deceased person who wanted to give his or her organs in the event of sudden death. It amends the Human Tissue Act 1983 and extends the so-called opt-in system as far as possible, taking into account the previously expressed views of the deceased rather than only seeking the views of the next of kin. The shadow Minister for Health, Dr Andrew McDonald, recently said that every year there are between seven to 10 cases where a deceased person has consented to organ donation but the donation did not proceed because the deceased person's family objected. This decision was usually against the previously expressed wish of the deceased. Tackling this issue will genuinely save lives.

This sensitive and complex field of medicine involves medical practitioners seeking permission from grieving families. I also recognise the distress that making such a decision can have on a grieving family. Intensive care medical staff are expected to raise the issue of organ donation while providing care to a loved one who is usually on life support. This is a harrowing situation for both staff and family. This month the O'Farrell Government is planning to train doctors at Royal Prince Alfred, Royal North Shore and John Hunter hospitals on how to approach the sensitive subject of organ donation with families.

I am advised that, if successful, this pilot program will be expanded to include nurses and intensive care unit specialists. This is a worthwhile initiative that will improve our ability to recover lives from loss. However,

I acknowledge that it will not diminish the pain to families in the loss of their loved one. Conversely, research suggests that allowing families to veto organ donation in a critical moment of grief can have negative effects for those family members in the future. On 12 August 2012, Dr David Shaw, a lecturer in ethics at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Glasgow, is quoted in the *British Medical Journal* as saying:

Families often regret the veto within two days, and the regret of having denied a loved one's last wish can last for decades.

That is yet another reason to strengthen the primacy of the dead person's expressed wishes, which this bill does. In October 2011, I was humbled and honoured to meet Oliver and Rosemarie Zammit, the parents of the late Doujon Zammit, who was murdered in Greece in July 2008. The meeting was arranged by Ms Martha Jabour, who does outstanding and tireless work as Executive Director of the Homicide Victims' Support Group (Australia) at Parramatta. On 12 October I had the pleasure of seeing Ms Jabour at Dolphins Point, Coogee, at a ceremony to mark the tenth anniversary commemoration of the Bali bombing terrorist attack. Ms Jabour was also there to offer support.

In July 2008, 20-year-old Doujon Zammit was in Greece on his first overseas holiday. He was bashed and slipped into a coma. His life ended when he was taken off life support by his family. In a wonderful, selfless act the Zammit family allowed Doujon's organs to be donated in Greece. They saved five separate lives and one of those five people is believed to be now living in Australia. This is a practical example of how one organ donor can change the lives of many. Before Doujon left Australia he had spoken to his family about being an organ donor. Even in that time of grief his parents honoured his wish; they are a truly wonderful couple.

The bill remodels the way in which organ donation is managed in hospitals and removes the registration of donations from the driver licensing system. It is envisaged that the driver licence registration of organ donor status will be abolished by November. New South Wales is the only Australian State in Australia to maintain a register separate from the national register. The other States closed their respective registers in 2003. On 30 September in the *Sunday Telegraph* the Minister for Health said that the O'Farrell Government will close the New South Wales driver licence organ donor register on 12 November. I have been advised that a "snapshot" of the existing driver license register will be maintained for five years so that people's registered intentions can still be discovered.

However, the laws covering organ donation will change so that information indicating that a deceased person who had registered as not wanting to donate but had since changed their mind can be considered. This means that organ and tissue donation will be able to proceed if a deceased person has told a relative or a friend that they want to be a donor after having previously registered an objection. The O'Farrell Government's plans arising from the bill also include bringing specialist requesters into hospitals—medical staff who are not part of a potential donor's treating team who will broach the topic of organ donation. They will be identified or nominated by the Director General of the Ministry for Health.

I acknowledge the community's views on and engagement with this complex issue. The main input into the Human Tissue Legislation Amendment Bill emanates from a December 2011 discussion paper issued by the O'Farrell Government entitled "Increasing Organ Donation in New South Wales". The paper received 76 submissions, 11 of which were from groups including clinical and organ donation advocacy organisations such as Transplant Australia, ShareLife, the New South Wales Health Clinical Ethics Advisory Panel, the Medical Services Committee and the Australian Medical Association. On a personal note, I declare that recently—17 September—I registered on Medicare Australia's Australian Organ Donor Register, which is headquartered in Hobart, Tasmania. Officials will obtain notification of my views on organ donation in the event of my sudden death. I urge my parliamentary colleagues who have not registered to do so. I do not want my daughter, who is my sole blood relative in Australia, to be forced to make a decision about organ donation, but I do want my wishes and views on it to be known. I commend the bill to the House, and I thank the House for its consideration.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN [3.51 p.m.]: In relation to the Hon. Walt Secord's final comment, I have told my family to make a decision about organ donation once I have gone. I make that declaration, for what it is worth. On behalf of the Christian Democratic Party I speak on the Human Tissue Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The object of the bill is to amend the Human Tissue Act 1983 to make further provision in respect of organ donation and the removal of tissue from a deceased person. It also amends the Anatomy Act 1977 to make further provision in respect of the authorisation of anatomical examinations. I shall start with some statistics I gave in a speech to a motion moved by the Hon. Melinda Pavey about DonateLife Week.

In 2011, 1,001 Australians received transplants from 337 donors. Those statistics mean that Australia has one of the most successful transplant records in the world. It is unfortunate to note that New South Wales has the lowest donation rate, with only 10.9 donors per one million people. On average, people on the transplant list wait between six months and four years. Therefore, people in New South Wales are dying because of a shortage of organ donations that could save their lives. Amazingly, just one organ and tissue donor can save and enhance the lives of 10 or more people. It is also unfortunate that 43 per cent of Australians do not know or are not sure of the donation wishes of their loved ones. As I said, I have spoken with my family about this matter. It is an important conversation.

In addressing these issues, the Minister for Health released a discussion paper in December 2011 entitled "Increasing Organ Donation in New South Wales". The paper outlined a range of issues, namely, whether to revoke allowing family members to refuse organ donation when the deceased has consented, strategies to support and raise awareness among culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and strategies to enhance the living donor program. Following this paper, the Government has introduced this bill as well as non-legislative measures to try to increase organ donations. One of the best measures that will be introduced is a single national register of organ donation intent called the Australian Organ Donation Register, which will be run by Medicare and promoted through Roads and Maritime Services. The national register will ensure that a person's donation decision can be checked 24 hours a day, seven days a week by authorised health care professionals anywhere in Australia. In the event of a person's death, information about their decision can also be provided to their family.

Under section 23 a designated officer can authorise the removal of tissue from a deceased person if they had expressed an objection but had later changed their mind and were in favour of organ donation at the time of their death. Additionally, the bill will make similar changes to the Anatomy Act 1977 to ensure that the most recent views of the deceased can be taken into account in determining whether or not a deceased person's body can be used in anatomical examinations. In New South Wales approximately seven to 10 cases arose where the deceased had consented to organ donation but the family objected to the donation and it did not proceed. The majority of advocacy groups support the family's right to veto organ donation, and this bill will not change that approach; rather, the bill aims to advocate the most appropriate means of increasing consent to organ donation.

The Christian Democratic Party supports a family's right to veto organ donation, particularly if it will hinder their grieving process. The Hon. Walt Secord referred to the ability to give organs and stated that it is a life-long gift. On the other hand, for a person facing the trauma of losing a loved one, an organ donation without the consent of the family can hinder the grieving process. A more balanced approach needs to be taken. As a side note, the most important point that helps a family make a decision about organ donation is knowledge of the wishes of their loved one. Families that have discussed and know each other's donation decisions are more likely to uphold those decisions.

Before this parliamentary session I spoke on the phone with a gentleman, Mr Fraser, who was a recent recipient of a kidney. Two kidneys had been transplanted from a person who had died following a brain haemorrhage; Mr Fraser was the recipient of one of them. Mr Fraser had been undergoing dialysis for 10 years. Since he had the kidney transplant in the past couple of weeks, he probably has had the best nights' sleep he has had in 10 years. He is under constant treatment with anti-viral, antibiotic and anti-rejection drugs, and so far so good. The person who donated her kidneys is a real champion and a hero to Mr Fraser and the other individual who also received a kidney. The organ donation has given them life abundant.

Given that organ and tissue donation saves and transforms lives, and one donor can save the lives of up to 10 people and significantly improve the lives of many, the Christian Democratic Party commends the Government for its efforts to increase organ donations. We also commend the bill to the House. I believe that incentive measures could be introduced to increase organ donation, such as discounts on licences, vehicle registration and insurance premiums. I am sure these initiatives would go a long way to inducing people to be more aggressive in ticking the box to indicate that they want to donate their organs.

I commend the Government's discussion paper entitled "Increasing Organ Donations in New South Wales" and the Hon. Jillian Skinner for her efforts to increase organ donation registrations. Members of this House who have not discussed organ donation with their family should not delay it. I encourage them to discuss it tonight or perhaps on the weekend. I also encourage members who have young children to allocate adequate time to discuss organ donation with them because it is a sensitive matter. I have seen comedy skits in which

people have had their organs removed and those images have stayed with me. Our children must be made aware of the outcomes and benefits of the life-long gift of organ donation. On 9 September 2006 the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, stated:

Every year one in six people who could have been saved by an organ donation dies because a matching organ does not become available. It is a deplorable situation and one that must not be ignored.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: Well before he was Premier.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Well before he was Premier. I commend the bill to the House on behalf of the Christian Democratic Party.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted at 4.00 p.m. for questions.

Item of business set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

DRIVER NOMINATIONS

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Given that the State Debt Recovery Office reports that 342 people voluntarily retracted 650 declarations after being advised their speeding or traffic matter was under investigation and another 75 people were issued with penalty notices for allegedly falsely nominating other people as drivers, what further action are you taking to stop people from deliberately misleading police and local courts?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I do not have the figures with me, so I will take those that the member has quoted as being accurate. Since becoming Minister I have been very keen to ensure that the Office of State Revenue improves its performance, and that has occurred in a number of areas. The first area we addressed was the significant outstanding debt related to unpaid fines, and we undertook a number of actions in relation to better managing that issue. I have reported to the House on several occasions the measures we have taken and are continuing to take to address that matter.

In the last couple of days we have been looking at the issue of substituted drivers and I have asked the Office of State Revenue to come down very hard on this issue. I am advised that there were more than 700 such incidences last year, including those related to people misguidedly attempting to assist relatives by allowing themselves to be falsely substituted as the offending driver. The Government is cracking down on this activity. The Office of State Revenue is also improving its management and utilisation of cameras, which obviously have improved in technical quality over the years. I do not have responsibility for, or play a direct role in relation to, policing or the courts, but as the Minister responsible for the Office of State Revenue, these are the sorts of measures that I can implement.

NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister inform the House about National Police Remembrance Day?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the honourable member for her question and I again welcome the opportunity to share the details of this significant day for the New South Wales Police Force with the wider community. National Police Remembrance Day was observed on Friday 28 September 2012. It is a day held in memory of police officers across the country who have died in the line of duty. On that day I had the honour of attending a service held at the New South Wales Police Wall of Remembrance in the Domain at which the 251 officers who have given their lives to protect the people of New South Wales since the formation of the New South Wales Police Force 150 years ago were rightly honoured.

It was a solemn reflection of the ultimate sacrifice those officers made and their legacy. The service included special acknowledgement of Senior Constable David Rixon, who was killed on 2 March 2012 whilst on duty in Tamworth. Senior Constable Rixon's tragic death was a salient reminder of the dedication police give to the service and protection of our communities. In upholding the law and keeping the people of New South

Wales safe, police put their lives on the line on a daily basis. National Police Remembrance Day honours the courage and bravery of all police officers across the country. It is also an important day to remember police officers who have lost their lives as a result of illness and in other circumstances.

National Police Remembrance Day recognises the families of all serving police officers and the families of those who did not make it home at the end of their shift. New South Wales Police Legacy is a not-for-profit organisation that looks after the families of deceased police officers in New South Wales. The organisation does an invaluable job providing financial and emotional support to more than 1,000 widows and widowers and 200 children across New South Wales. Importantly, New South Wales Police Legacy ensures that these families remain part of the wider police family. The police family is a close-knit group of people who support each other and their families.

Also in attendance at the service at the Wall of Remembrance was 12-year-old Elayna Day and her grandmother. Elayna was only six years old when her father, Sergeant Graham Clifford Day, died but she remains a firm member of the police family. She is the proud recipient of the 2012 Commissioner's Scholarship. The New South Wales Police Legacy scholarship will assist Elayna as she enters high school next year to pursue her dream of becoming a veterinarian. She is a prime example of the fine work undertaken by New South Wales Police Legacy in supporting the families of our fallen police officers. The need for an organisation like Police Legacy highlights the risks associated with being a police officer. It is a difficult, stressful and dangerous job. In informing the House on the significance of National Police Remembrance Day, I would like to take this opportunity to thank police officers across the State, all of whom are serving and protecting the people of New South Wales. Their commitment is acknowledged and respected, their bravery and courage is honoured and admired and I thank them for their contribution in ensuring that we have a safe community.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for the Hunter. In light of recent revelations from the State Debt Recovery Office that 75 people were issued with penalty notices for allegedly falsely nominating other people as drivers, can you explain how the former member for Clarence has escaped any penalty after he publicly admitted that he falsified a statutory declaration in relation to a speeding offence?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: This matter was canvassed during a recent estimates committee hearing. To assist the member, who was not at that hearing and who, I assume, has not been in a position to read the transcript of that proceeding, I will give some further advice. I am advised that this matter was investigated by the New South Wales Police Force and was then referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for action following advice from the New South Wales Director of Public Prosecutions. I understand that the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions has concluded that there was not a reasonable prospect of conviction and has decided not to proceed with the matter. All proper processes have been followed, without interference by government. The decision to refer the matter to the Commonwealth authorities was made entirely by the New South Wales Police Force. To make it clear to the Opposition and to assist the honourable member in his deliberations, I advise that all police inquiries have been undertaken with absolutely no involvement of Government Ministers or their representatives—not that he would suggest such a thing.

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries. Is the Minister aware of comments by the South Australian Premier that farmers who suffer stock loss and property damage from flooding because of the extra environmental water in the Murray-Darling Basin do not deserve compensation? What is the Government doing to protect New South Wales farmers in the debate over returning water to the basin, and what preparations have been made should South Australia take High Court action if at least 3,200 gigalitres of water is not returned in the Gillard Government's first national plan for the river system, which is to be tabled by the end of next month?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the honourable member for his question. I share the concerns that are inherent in his question regarding farmers who will be affected. It is a question of detail and at the moment it is a movable feast. I am informed that on 6 August 2012 the Murray-Darling Basin Authority released yet another version of the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan, following the comments from the ministerial council in July. The Commonwealth Government's Murray-Darling Basin Authority has still not delivered in its

latest report on the basin plan, the effects of which the South Australian Premier referred to, I have to say, in intemperate words. It has gone some way towards addressing—but not far enough—the key issues for New South Wales. As a prime example of that, the proposed plan still does not include this despite the Ministerial Council's consensus document and key stakeholders supporting the apportionment of water recovery for significant downstream shared reduction between States and catchments.

Further, the authority has not acted in line with the best available science and expertise of New South Wales hydrogeologists in setting New South Wales groundwater extraction limits in some aquifers. The New South Wales Government has on this and previous occasions presented to the authority a sensible way forward. This has included a 3 per cent limit on Commonwealth licence buybacks per valley per decade to provide sufficient time for rural communities to adjust, not just to die as some would have let happen. However, the authority has not acted on the New South Wales requests, including the need for clear principles for a water recovery strategy, minimising third party flooding impacts and providing greater flexibility in the timetable to meet sustainable diversion limits for valleys where a significant volume of water is still required to be recovered.

Members on this side of the House, and I suspect many on the crossbench, have always maintained that infrastructure investment and environmental works and measures are the most sensible way of achieving the social, economic and environmental outcomes of the basin plan, not water buybacks. I acknowledge that the authority has included the potential for a structural adjustment mechanism that may reduce the volume of water to be recovered, but like most things the devil will be in the detail on whether this will work. It is significant that the jurisdictional funding arrangements for the implementation of the plan have still not been specified by the Commonwealth. The New South Wales Government provided further detailed comments to Federal Minister Burke by 27 August as was required. However, the Minister for Primary Industries remains concerned that while the initial New South Wales Government submission to the authority and the Ministerial Council consensus document were both very well received by the basin community and stakeholders, key aspects have still been ignored.

Frankly it is up to Federal Minister Tony Burke to amend the plan and finalise the important funding and community support programs that need to go with the plan. Minister Burke has a lot of work to do in order to prepare a plan that is worth taking to Federal Parliament. We require the final plan and supporting Commonwealth programs to meet our expectations and commitment to maintaining the health and productivity of New South Wales river and groundwater systems while ensuring strong regional communities. [*Time expired.*]

WESTCONNEX MOTORWAY

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Can the Minister update the House on the priority motorway project for New South Wales?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank my Parliamentary Secretary, who is the best Parliamentary Secretary I have ever had, for this important question—which I should have thought is the sort of question that, frankly, those opposite should be asking me. They should be as pleased about this as we are. I am particularly proud to say that the Liberal-Nationals Government is targeting infrastructure spending to ensure that taxpayers get the greatest bang for their buck on average—\$61.8 billion over four years—by investing \$1 billion a year more on infrastructure than was invested by Labor during the last four years of its term in government. We are getting on with the job. As a government we have done the hard yards. We have done the work to identify the most critical infrastructure projects for New South Wales. We all know how those opposite used to make infrastructure decisions. Members need only remember the cancelled Rozelle metro project at a cost of almost \$500 million to New South Wales taxpayers. That was a doozy. We could ask Eric about that, except Eric is not here today.

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: Point of order: There are two aspects to my point of order. First, I am actually here; and, second, the Minister knows he should refer to all members by their correct titles at all times.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind the Minister to refer to members by their correct titles.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: He is like Fisher's ghost: he keeps coming back. As I said, we are getting on with the job. That is why upon coming to government we established Infrastructure NSW, an independent body staffed with the best and the brightest from both the public and private sectors to advise us

on what infrastructure projects need to be built, in what order and with what finance to create new jobs and grow our economy. Members opposite do not like good news. This is a day of good news and they are whimpering and trying to pretend that somehow people do not like it. But people do like it because it is improving the State.

At the start of this month Infrastructure NSW provided the blueprint with a key recommendation to act on Sydney's next priority motorway project. Within hours the New South Wales Government gave the green light to the primary recommendation, WestConnex, a key motorway project for Sydney's west. The 33-kilometre WestConnex motorway will link Sydney's west with the airport and Port Botany precinct, and will include the M4 extension and the duplication of the M5 East to King Georges Road. Working together, Infrastructure NSW and Roads and Maritime Services have estimated WestConnex will result in reduced travel times of between 15 and 35 minutes between Sydney's west and south-west and the airport and Port Botany. This time is money in the bank for businesses moving imports and exports to and from the global gateways of Port Botany and Sydney airport.

Unlike those opposite and some members to their left, we are getting on with the job of delivering WestConnex. The New South Wales Government has already established the Sydney Motorways Project Office and appointed a project director. The project office has made a start on the planning work, including project definition—[*Time expired.*]

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I wish to ask a supplementary question. Can the Minister elucidate his answer?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The project office has made a start on the planning work, including project definition, project milestones, commencement of environmental assessment work and the planning approval strategy. Most of this work should be complete by July 2013. We have also earmarked \$1.8 billion for WestConnex and we will be working with the private sector and the Federal Government on delivery of this project. I particularly welcome the Federal Coalition's commitment of \$1.5 billion to WestConnex. Unlike their Labor counterparts they are taking seriously the needs of Sydney and New South Wales. Today the Premier has written to the Prime Minister to accept her offer of \$25 million towards the project office and to formally request the Commonwealth to match our \$1.8 billion commitment. I urge the Federal Government to get on board with this great project.

Every extra dollar that the Federal Government contributes to WestConnex puts downward pressure on the tolls that will be needed to fund it. Congestion currently costs the New South Wales economy approximately \$4 billion per year in lost productivity, and that is projected to double to over \$8 billion per year by 2020. By acting now we are not simply addressing current congestion on our motorways; we are providing New South Wales with the critical infrastructure that is needed to increase productivity, grow our economy, create new jobs and make New South Wales number one again. WestConnex is yet another step in the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals plan to deliver the critical roads and transport infrastructure that is essential to grow the State's economy.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER'S OFFICE

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Attorney General, and it follows on from a question I asked in March about funding for the Environmental Defender's Office. Is the Minister aware of reports in yesterday's *Australian*, which claimed that a senior executive from the Environmental Defender's Office helped draft a document titled "Stopping the Coal Export Boom: Funding Proposal for the Australian Anti-Coal Movement" as part of a plan or alleged plan by Greenpeace to cripple Australian coal exports by disrupting and delaying key projects in infrastructure? Given the Environmental Defender's Office's alleged involvement in this matter, will the Government now immediately suspend funding to the Environmental Defender's Office and follow the leader of Queensland by conducting a review of such community legal centres and their role in political activism?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the honourable member for his question. As the Minister for the Hunter I am alarmed by the question that the member has raised. I give an undertaking to get that question to the Attorney General as quickly as possible to seek an answer for the honourable member.

DRIVER NOMINATIONS

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra. Will the Minister instruct the State Debt Recovery Office to conduct an audit in relation to the 75 people who were issued with penalty notices for allegedly nominating other people as drivers to ensure that none had signed Commonwealth statutory declarations?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I believe that the issue relating to the forms incorrectly referring to the Commonwealth legislation about statutory declarations has been rectified.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate how it has been rectified?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I understand that the form now correctly refers to the New South Wales Oaths Act.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister please advise the House on progress on the Government's information and communications technology reform agenda?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the honourable member for a very good question. I am proud to say that the New South Wales Government has achieved more in the past 18 months than Labor did in 16 years. Firstly, we have set up a new governance framework elevating information and communications technology to a key priority of government. We established a new information and communications technology board and, importantly, for the first time we gave industry a seat at the table. We established an information and communications technology leadership group comprising the chief information officers and business leaders in government and specific working groups, reporting to the leadership group made up of both government and industry representatives with specific work plans to implement the strategy. Lastly, we established the information and communications technology industry advisory panel, which has put industry experience and new practices that are emerging across the sector at the forefront of the Government's thinking.

Less than six months ago, the Deputy Premier and I launched the New South Wales Government Information and Communications Technology Strategy 2012. The comprehensive document outlines the steps we are taking to transform the New South Wales public service into a modern and efficient government. It provides time frames for 85 key actions against seven major priorities. What have we done so far? We have established Service NSW to lead the delivery of customer-centric service. We are reforming procurement to make it easier to supply to government, including establishing a New South Wales Procurement Board, mandating the use of the Procure IT contract, allowing suppliers to retain intellectual property and contacts with the Government, and allowing a service catalogue.

By the end of this year, all departments will have developed open government plans, which will outline the actions they will take in relation to online and social technologies. Social media policy guidelines have already been drafted and are available on the "Have Your Say" website for public consultation. The Government is also in the final stages of approval for a new single New South Wales Government digital information security policy. These are just a few of the things we said we would do, and we are delivering on those commitments.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Greg Donnelly to order for the first time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: But there is more to do. Some of the key pieces of work that are coming up include making more government data sets available for people to use through an expanded *data.nsw.gov.au* website, developing an open access licensing framework, building two new data centres in Silverwater and Unanderra to support the transition to contemporary cloud-based services by government. The development of a whole-of-government cloud policy is also on track for consideration in November of this year. Also coming soon is the establishment of a pilot cloud offering for the Government. We have already begun scoping the work for this and we will update the House about it in due course.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I wish to ask a supplementary question. I ask the Minister to elucidate his answer.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: Point of order: I have referred to standing orders a number of times. If Ministers who have been interrupted in their response want an extension of time, they should ask the House for leave to speak for a further minute.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind Ministers that they have that option, and in many circumstances that may be the appropriate option for them to take. I will allow the supplementary question on this occasion.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The information and communications technology strategy is rightly an ambitious program of reform. What we have achieved in a short time is significant and confirms that we are taking the right approach. At an event at Parliament House last week, over 150 industry representatives participated in the second New South Wales Information and Communications Technology Strategic Ministerial Forum. Representatives from some of the biggest information and communications technology firms globally as well as local small and medium businesses heard from the Deputy Premier and me about the Government's progress on our information and communications technology strategy to date. They were also given the opportunity to discuss new and emerging trends across the sector in a panel session. Feedback on the forum was overwhelmingly positive not only for the Government's progress but for our willingness to engage the industry and also to stand up and be accountable for our actions.

The information and communications technology environment moves fast. The challenge for the New South Wales Government has been to create and implement a strategy that makes us as flexible and adaptive as the technologies that we and the residents of New South Wales rely upon. We continue to drive ambitiously and aggressively the reforms that are absolutely necessary to bring New South Wales into the twenty-first century. We were able to produce an update document at the forum last week. It contains a very nice photo of me, and I am going to make sure that a copy of this important brochure is given to each member of the Opposition and the crossbenchers. I am sure they will all be interested to read it.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS NEW SOUTH WALES

Dr JOHN KAYE: I direct my question to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. What steps has the Minister taken to ensure that the funding for Cystic Fibrosis New South Wales is not reduced as recommended in a leaked departmental briefing note? Will funding for Cystic Fibrosis New South Wales remain the primary responsibility of the Department of Family and Community Services or will it be shifted entirely to the Department of Health? If so, will the Minister guarantee that Cystic Fibrosis New South Wales will retain its current level of funding?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the member for his important question. As the question is directed through me to the Minister for Health, I will obtain a detailed answer.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I direct my question to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Has the Minister received any information, verbal or written, suggesting that the former member for Clarence, Steve Cansdell, may have falsely nominated other drivers to cop the blame for traffic offences committed by him on more than one occasion? If so, did the Minister refer that information to the police? If not, why not?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No and no.

BOTSWANA FIRE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I direct my question to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister advise the House about the progress of Botswana Fire Management Assistance Program?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I have previously spoken in this House about the exceptional work that the NSW Rural Fire Service is undertaking in Botswana in assisting authorities in that country to build their bush fire fighting and fire management capacity. New South Wales expertise in fighting bushfires was praised by Botswana's Minister for Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, the Hon. Kitso Mokaila, during his recent visit. I had the pleasure of meeting with Minister Mokaila and Rural Fire Service Commissioner Fitzsimmons to discuss the Botswana Fire Management Assistance Program. Minister Mokaila travelled to Australia in recognition of the exceptional success of the program and to express his appreciation of what the Rural Fire Service and Australia have done for his country.

Since the program's inception in 2009, the NSW Rural Fire Service has met or exceeded all its targets. The third phase of the program was successfully completed in August, culminating in Botswana's first National Fire Management Conference. A number of critical components of fire management were successfully covered in the last phase, including crew leader training, fire investigation and community engagement. Based on the unique and highly successful model of the NSW Rural Fire Service, the program has successfully trained firefighters, identified suitable firefighting equipment and established a coordinated firefighting model in bushfire-prone Botswana. I understand that everyone involved is extremely happy with progress to date and that the Botswana local communities introduced to the program are embracing their responsibility for fire prevention and fire suppression.

I am delighted to advise that funding provided by AusAID will continue for the next two years until the anticipated completion of the program. Firefighters from Botswana will also visit New South Wales during the next two years to learn about the benefits of aerial firefighting and hazard reduction and to witness one of the largest volunteer firefighting forces in the world in action. The NSW Rural Fire Service is committed to sharing its considerable experience in fighting bushfires with nations that do not have the benefit of advanced fire prevention, firefighting and emergency management systems such as we have developed in New South Wales. With the contribution of dedicated volunteers and staff of the NSW Rural Fire Service, Botswana will have a comprehensive and systematic fire management organisation in the not too distant future.

WESTCONNEX MOTORWAY

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I direct my question to the Minister for Roads and Ports. In response to a question during the budget estimates committee hearing last Friday the Minister said that his working relationship with Infrastructure NSW has been terrific. How many meetings has he had with Infrastructure NSW about WestConnex?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: As I usually say—and I mean it—this is an important question. I cannot tell the member the exact number of meetings I have had, but it is numerous. It would be getting close to 10 over a period of time. I have met with various people from WestConnex, but I am sorry that I cannot provide the exact number off the top of my head. I have certainly had more than five and getting towards 10 meetings—and it may well be more than that—at which WestConnex was addressed. I have also met with various people from Roads and Maritime Services and Infrastructure NSW, from the chairman and the chief executive officer down. I am more than willing to consult my diary to provide an exact number.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I direct my question to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for the Hunter. What action is the Minister taking to ensure that a full and proper investigation is undertaken into the handling of the Steve Cansdell matter after the lawyer for the woman who blew the whistle publicly contradicted earlier suggestions that Mr Cansdell had escaped justice because she had refused to be interviewed?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: If the member has concerns about the conduct of that investigation and she has reason to believe that something untoward happened, I suggest that she refer the matter to the Ombudsman. I have answered the question fully.

BRIDGES FOR THE BUSH

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I direct my question to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on Bridges for the Bush?

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: Will you have time?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I hope I do not run out of time. I thank the member for her question and for her support when we announced the project recently in Gunnedah. Not only has the Government earmarked \$1.8 billion to start delivering the WestConnex project, it has also allocated an additional \$135 million over the next five years for an infrastructure program appropriately called "Bridges for the Bush". After 16 years of city-centric Labor policies, and by extension 16 years of Labor neglect and mismanagement, sadly we have many run-down roads, crumbling culverts and broken-down bridges in the bush.

Bridges for the Bush is a historic program of works designed to improve road safety and freight productivity by replacing or upgrading bridges at 17 key locations across rural and regional New South Wales. In an August submission to the Nation Building Program, the New South Wales Government sought matching funding from the Federal Government for these bridges. The first component of the initiative will focus on five priority bridges to enable them to carry higher mass limit vehicles and thereby increase freight productivity in New South Wales.

Before the Greens have another of their famous meltdowns about heavier trucks on roads, it is estimated that replacing or upgrading the five higher mass limit deficient bridges will remove 8,000 heavy vehicle trips from the New South Wales freight task each year. That is good for road safety, noise and general amenity, not to mention the reduction in wear and tear on our State and local roads and the positive impact on the environment. It will also save New South Wales taxpayers more than \$200 million in economic, social and environmental costs over the next 30 years.

Of the five priority bridges, four will be replaced and one will be upgraded. The bridges to be replaced over the next five years include Kapooka Bridge on the Olympic Highway south of Wagga Wagga, which currently bears more than 150,000 truck movements each year and has dangerous dog-leg approaches. The Hon. Sarah Mitchell and I were at the Gunnedah Railway Bridge last week. That bridge is on the Oxley Highway and when it is replaced we will deliver 660 kilometres of continuous road for more productive farm freight vehicles.

The Murray River crossing at Echuca currently experiences about 53,000 truck movements each year. When it is replaced in partnership with VicRoads we will see the removal of the only remaining higher mass limit deficient bridge on the Cobb Highway. The Tulludunna Bridge is a very important crossing near Wee Waa, and when it is replaced we will see the removal of the only remaining higher mass limit deficient bridge on the Kamilaroi Highway. The bridge over the Bemboka River on the Snowy Mountains Highway near Bega will undergo an upgrade, including widening, delivering nearly 400 kilometres of continuous road for a higher mass limit in the region.

Twelve timber truss bridges will also be replaced or upgraded under Bridges for the Bush, dramatically improving road safety and freight productivity across many regions within New South Wales. The Opposition should not sledge the Government; it should say, "Well done. The Government is doing something that should have happened years ago." This is good news for the people in regional New South Wales. Not only will those bridges be improved, but other bridges will move up the priority list. [*Time expired.*]

MILK PRICES

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries. Will the Minister outline what steps the Government is taking to protect the interests of New South Wales dairy farmers against the continuing aggressive milk pricing wars being waged by supermarkets?

The Hon. Robert Brown: Name the question "Coles and Woolworths".

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: One is worse than the other.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Which one?

The Hon. Walt Secord: Pick one.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: They might be donors of yours, so I will have to be careful.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Are they donors of yours?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No, I am not a shareholder. I know the real concerns of the Hon. Paul Green, who has approached me privately about this matter and I have organised a meeting with the staff of the Minister for Primary Industries. The member's friends and family in his region are suffering. Many members know people in the dairy industry who are suffering. This problem arose when the Labor Party deregulated the dairy industry. There was a rush to deregulate the industry and we had no choice. We held up the former Government for as long as we could.

[*Interruption*]

Yes, they did. They were part of us fighting back from the Labor Party on its rush to deregulate. The supermarket chains, one in particular that goes "down, down, down"—

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: Like the Labor Party's vote.

The Hon. Rick Colless: And The Greens.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Exactly, like the Labor Party and The Greens vote at the last local government elections. Using milk and primary produce as part—

The Hon. Steve Whan: How are The Nationals going with—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I encourage both members to desist from interjecting.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: He can say that on the losers lounge, because we have a new member for Monaro, a member of The Nationals. It is abhorrent that rural commodities such as milk and meat are used as price setters in supermarkets where one drives down the price and the other follows. I hope something can happen under the Federal legislation. I am sure that every member of this House shares the concern of the Hon. Paul Green and me about this matter. I will refer the question to the Minister for Primary Industries.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Both the Minister and the Attorney General have claimed that Mr Cansdell cannot be prosecuted under State law for falsely signing a Commonwealth statutory declaration. Last week the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions advised that he was "not satisfied that a Commonwealth offence was involved". What action has the Minister taken to close this legal loophole?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I refer the Hon. Steve Whan to my earlier answer.

WORKCOVER MENTOR PROGRAM

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister update the House on WorkCover's Mentor Program?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: As members would be aware, the New South Wales Government recognises that it needs to work closely with business and workers to help decrease the level of workplace injuries and fatalities across the State. Any workplace fatality is a tragedy, and the New South Wales Government is committed to improving safety outcomes to make sure that workers return home safely at the end of each day, which is vital for our community, workers and employers. WorkCover has developed a range of initiatives to support small and large businesses to focus on safety.

Last week I had the pleasure of attending the launch of this year's WorkCover Mentor Program at the Sydney Mint. The Mentor Program brings together large and small businesses to improve safety and productivity. This year 25 large businesses have been enlisted by WorkCover to help 30 small businesses create safer work places. We all know that small business can find it challenging to dedicate resources to work health and safety while concentrating on their day-to-day business needs. The Mentor Program employs a network of large businesses with proven track records in work health and safety and injury management, who work in partnership with WorkCover to mentor smaller organisations. The mentors provide invaluable industry-specific advice to small business.

The program includes a series of site visits, advisory sessions and workshops. Mentored employers are also eligible to apply for a \$500 WorkCover small business rebate after making a safety improvement in their workplace. Importantly, mentors understand the work health and safety challenges faced by participants in the program and through their expert advice and assistance they can suggest innovative solutions to everyday problems. The Mentor Program is a solid example of how WorkCover is working collaboratively with industry to achieve safer and more productive workplaces in New South Wales and to show that safe business is good business.

I am pleased that this year the Mentor Program has a focus on return to work. In this way, it is directly supporting the Government's recent reforms to the workers' compensation scheme. The workers' compensation

reforms have been driven by the need to refocus the scheme on its core objectives. Key to this is making sure injured workers get back into the workforce. By driving cultural change at all levels from insurers and WorkCover's frontline staff to employers and workers we are making sure that the entire workers compensation system is equipped and geared towards facilitating improved return to work outcomes.

The Mentor Program now includes a number of elements to help small and medium sized businesses assist injured workers back to work. The program will assist businesses understand what suitable employment is and provide some practical solutions. It is essential that workers and employers work together to make workplaces safer to ensure the State's businesses remain productive. The Mentor Program actively contributes to achieving the Government's vision by building capability in industry and business, both large and small. It means more productive New South Wales workplaces and, most importantly, more workers returning home safely to their families at the end of the working day.

SYNTHETIC DRUGS

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Is the Government aware that the Victorian Government will outlaw synthetic drugs, such as meow meow, GLB, BZP and GHB, which mimic cannabis and amphetamines, which are sold in sex and paraphernalia shops and delude purchasers into believing they are safe? What measures will the Government put in place to ensure those drugs are banned in New South Wales?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I know that Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile is very keen and enthusiastic to obtain an answer to this question. I am sure he has had a momentary lapse in concentration but this matter is currently before a parliamentary inquiry. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile is always ahead of the game—perhaps he did not lose concentration; he knows exactly what he is doing. It is more appropriate to wait for the conclusion of the parliamentary inquiry in relation to this matter and then I can respond.

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: Some people may die in the meantime.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I will wait for the conclusion of the parliamentary inquiry and its report to the House.

CITYRAIL FARES

The Hon. WALT SECORD: In light of the failure of the Minister for Finance and Services to answer a question at budget estimates on 8 October about CityRail fares to Wollongong, does the Minister now know the cost of an adult fare from Wollongong to Town Hall?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: If the member would like to read today's *Illawarra Mercury* he will see it published there. By the way, staff had to go to the CityRail website to get the information because the *Illawarra Mercury* journalist did not know what it was.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer in relation to the last time he took public transport? The Minister would then know the cost of public transport fares.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Supplementary questions may not canvass new material; that question clearly did.

NATIONAL TSUNAMI EXERCISE

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: I address my question to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister inform the House about the involvement of the NSW State Emergency Service in this year's national tsunami exercise?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: The national tsunami exercise—or Exercise Ausnami 12 as it is known—recently took place for the east coast of Australia. First, let me give members some context to this event. The NSW State Emergency Service is a member of the Australian Tsunami Advisory Group [ATAG], which is an advisory group to the Australian and New Zealand Emergency Management Committee. The

NSW State Emergency Service has been an active member of the Australian Tsunami Advisory Group since the decision to establish a national Australian tsunami warning system following the devastating 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.

Prior to the 2004 tsunami the NSW State Emergency Service had commenced research and planning for tsunami as a hazard with potential to impact on New South Wales. That terrible event—which, as the world will never forget, killed more than 200,000 people in countries bordering the Indian Ocean—led to the NSW State Emergency Service being designated as the lead combat agency for tsunami in Australia. The NSW State Emergency Service has now developed the New South Wales tsunami emergency management sub-plan—the first fully comprehensive plan of its type to be developed in Australia.

Our national tsunami warning system is operated jointly by the Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology and Geoscience Australia. This is how it works. A virtual facility, called the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre, is divided between Canberra, where earthquake detection is undertaken by the Geoscience people, and Melbourne. The National Oceanographic and Meteorological Service in Melbourne, which is part of the Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology, works on tsunami modelling and warning product generation. By national agreement through the work of Australian Tsunami Advisory Group, the Bureau of Meteorology is the sole source of official tsunami warnings for mainland Australia and all offshore Australian islands and territories.

About every two years a series of exercises is arranged to test the communications systems and tsunami warning distribution protocols. Two exercises have recently been conducted as part of Exercise Ausnami 12: the west coast scenario, which took place on Tuesday 25 September, and the east coast scenario, which took place a few days earlier on Thursday 20 September and involved the New South Wales State Emergency Service. These twin scenarios enabled testing for a possible Indian Ocean-generated tsunami on the west coast of Australia, as well as a Pacific Ocean-generated tsunami on the east coast. The Federal Attorney General's department coordinated the national exercise. The extent to which individual jurisdictions link to these exercises is optional and can range from communications systems and desktop discussion, through to full field deployments.

The NSW State Emergency Service decided the east coast scenario would comprise a communications and desktop discussion exercise involving all of its regional operation centres. The desktop exercise included eight coastal regions at Lismore, Grafton, Taree, Maitland, Hornsby, Seven Hills, Bankstown and Wollongong. The exercise generated warning messages, which were processed by the NSW State Emergency Operations Centre and then passed to 25 key agencies listed in the State tsunami sub-plan, including the NSW State Emergency Operations Centre. This particular exercise did not involve any field activation or deployment of any emergency service or supporting organisation. Once again, our NSW State Emergency Service is at the forefront of planning for the very real threat of tsunami, which can prove so devastating to countries surrounded by ocean.

PARSONS REVIEW

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. When will the Government respond to the Parsons review?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: As I have indicated to the House, the NSW Police Force is in the process of working through its response to a number of questions from me in regard to its initial response. When that response is available it will go before Cabinet and Cabinet will, I suspect through me, make a statement in the future.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer by outlining the specific timetable for responding to the Parsons review?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: As I have indicated, after 16 years of neglect by the former Government these important issues should not be rushed—

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order: My supplementary question was specific. The Minister immediately launched into an attack on the Opposition. I ask that the Minister be drawn back to the leave of the supplementary question.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is no point of order. It is far too early for me to form that point of view.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Just in case I missed the member—I will not miss him this time. After 16 years of neglect by the former Government those opposite have a hide trying to rush through reforms in the NSW Police Force—

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order: If my point of order about 30 seconds ago was unclear—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have the gist of the member's point of order. The Minister was addressing the issue of timing. There is no point of order.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: It is important that the NSW Police Force is given the opportunity to consider a comprehensive reform proposal such as this and to respond to it. It is also important that the Government ask for further elucidation of these matters. Here is the Opposition—

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order: It pains me to take another point of order, but my supplementary question was specifically about providing a timetable as to the Parsons review.

The PRESIDENT: Order! As the Minister's time has expired the member's point of order is moot.

BETTER BOATING PROGRAM

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I address my question to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on the Better Boating Program?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for a great question—he is the owner of the largest floating gin palace on the South Coast.

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: That is hilarious.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Here he is: Fisher's ghost. He has a few hilarious things happening.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: Point of order: The Minister is making imputations about members from both sides of the Chamber. I ask the Minister to desist from doing so.

The PRESIDENT: Order! That may be taking things a little bit too far. There is no point of order.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The Government is committed to rebuilding infrastructure and it is getting on with the job. Each year about 1.5 million people across the State go boating. The Government wants them to have a safe and convenient infrastructure to access our waterways. Under the Better Boating Program the Government offers about \$5 million each year in grants to local councils, boating clubs and community groups. Last financial year the grants went to projects including new boat ramps, public wharves, public pontoon facilities, dinghy storage and sewerage pump-out facilities. At the heart of the Better Boating Program is a strategy to ensure local communities right across New South Wales use their waterways, not just in our major centres. The 2011-12 program saw 54 projects in regional New South Wales funded, totalling more than \$3 million.

The works included the new public wharf in Windsor on the Hawkesbury River, including a new pontoon and gangway facility—a project completed in June this year. Also completed in June was the new Kreemer Street boat ramp on the Murray River at West Albury. In Collarenebri, on the Barwon River, the boat ramp upgrade will replace the flood-damaged ramp and upgrade drainage, as well as enable the construction of an access road at the site. And it is a similar story in Sydney, where the grants included four projects for Sydney Harbour boat ramps worth \$1.5 million.

Applications for the next round of funding closed in early August, and for this we have singled out improved disability and public access, as well as modern, practical and safety-oriented designs. Proposals need to be of a lasting nature, available for use by a broad cross-section of the boating public and be supported by the local council and community. There has been significant regional interest again this year, with a total of 69 new regional applications: almost 20 each from the North Coast and Hunter regions, about a dozen from the South Coast and Murray inland regions, and half a dozen from the Hawkesbury and Sutherland regions.

In the Sydney Harbour boat ramps category, there have been another four applications. The applications are now being comprehensively reviewed by an assessment committee comprising representatives from the

Office of Boating Safety and Maritime Affairs, Roads and Maritime Services, the Boating Industry Association, recreational fishing groups and local government. Successful grants are expected to be announced by the end of December—more good news for boating communities and local communities across New South Wales.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: The time for questions has expired. If members have further questions I suggest they place them on notice.

DEFERRED ANSWERS

The following answers to questions without notice were received by the Clerk during the adjournment of the House:

M5 WEST WIDENING PROJECT

On 21 August 2012 the Hon. Adam Searle asked the Minister for Roads and Ports a question without notice regarding the M5 West widening project. The Minister for Roads and Ports provided the following response:

I am advised that on the M5 West:

1. Breakdown lanes are generally 2.5 metres in width.
2. In most areas, the width of the breakdown lane will not be altered because the additional lanes are being provided through widening in the median.

X-RATED MATERIAL

On 21 August 2012 Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice, a question without notice regarding X-rated material. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided the following response:

I am advised when the Vice Squad was disbanded components of the squad were rolled over into other areas of the then NSW Police Service.

The NSW Police Force has advised me:

Local Area Commands conduct operations on restricted premises based on intelligence, complaints and requests. The State Crime Command also liaises with the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department in relation to premises to be targeted.

To give some recent examples, Central Metropolitan Region Commands have conducted sixteen business inspections in the past twelve months in search of pornographic material. Three search warrants have also been executed in the Region, resulting in the seizure of two items of child pornography. In the Western Region a search warrant was executed in May 2012 on a sex shop which resulted in the proprietor pleading guilty to a charge of selling or publicly exhibiting a film classified RC or X 18+.

Police will continue to enforce the relevant legislation and lay appropriate charges where offences are detected.

LIVESTOCK HEALTH AND PEST AUTHORITIES

On 21 August 2012 the Hon. Steve Whan asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries, a question without notice regarding Livestock Health and Pest Authorities. The Minister for Primary Industries provided the following response:

The State Management Council was advised by the Minister in June 2012 that the administrative services grant would not be renewed, on the basis that for 15 years, the State Management Council has received additional funds from the NSW Department of Primary Industries budget to prop up its administration services. In addition, despite these additional annual funds being provided, the State Management Council has still not been able to meet Auditor-General timelines for producing robust, auditable financial statements.

I am advised that the State Management Council decided to collect an additional 2 per cent levy from each of the Livestock Health & Pest Authorities, on top of the 12 per cent the Council already collected, to support its administrative functions. For an organisation which last financial year collected \$3.5million from 14 Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, and has had 15 years of annual grants to help get its affairs in order to justify additional monies being withdrawn from frontline services and directed towards middle management financial administration is unjustifiable.

NATIVE VEGETATION REGULATIONS

On 21 August 2012 the Hon. Robert Borsak asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries, a question without notice regarding native vegetation regulations. The Minister for Primary Industries provided the following response:

As the Minister for Roads and Ports said in his answer, the Government is consulting with, and listening to, the views of a broad cross-section of interested parties on this issue, especially farmers.

Further information about progress on this matter should be referred to the Hon. Robyn Parker, MP, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage.

FIREARMS REGISTRY

On 22 August 2012 the Hon. Robert Brown asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a question without notice regarding the firearms registry. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided the following response:

The NSW Police Force has advised me that the envelopes used by the Firearms Registry are unmarked in that they are not identified as coming from either the NSW Police Force or the Firearms Registry, or as correspondence regarding firearms. However, they do display the Registry's Locked Bag return mail address.

TRANSPORT ACCESS PROGRAM

On 22 August 2012 the Hon. Jan Barham asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Transport, a question without notice regarding the Transport Access Program. The Acting Minister for Transport provided the following response:

I am advised:

Transport for NSW consults with representatives from advocacy groups for disadvantaged and disabled people and the wider community.

An Accessible Transport Advisory Committee was formed in November 2011 to provide independent advice with the aim of improving public and private transport access for people with a disability or with mobility issues.

Consultation has also been undertaken with the Council of Social Service of New South Wales, and the broader public have had an opportunity to review and provide input to planning for projects.

RESOURCES FOR REGIONS PROGRAM

On 22 August 2012 the Hon. Mick Veitch asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, a question without notice regarding the Resources for Regions program. The Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, provided the following response:

As was made clear in our pre-election policy, the Resources for Regions program will see \$160 million allocated over the course of the government's current term. An initial \$9.9 million has been allocated which will help meet the local infrastructure needs of Singleton and Muswellbrook. Projects include:

- \$4 million for Muswellbrook Hospital Emergency Department Upgrade;
- \$1.9 million towards replacing timber bridge on Herbert Street, Broke;
- \$2 million towards Bridgman Road, Singleton Heights widening and intersection upgrade with New England Highway; and
- \$2 million towards Pioneer Road, Hunterview extension and roundabouts.

Unlike the previous Labor Government, the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals Government will not allocate funds it does not have. As our new capital fund Restart NSW receives additional capital, more funding will be provided in subsequent years to this important program.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE COMMISSIONER

On 22 August 2012 the Hon. Paul Green asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a question without notice regarding the State Emergency Service Commissioner. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided the following response:

The New South Wales State Emergency Service has advised me:

The New South Wales SES currently has no statutory consent or concurrence role in respect of floodplain or coastal land use planning or development. However, it works closely with both the Department of Planning and Infrastructure [DoPI] and the Office of Environment and Heritage [OEH] in the context of land use planning.

At the strategic level, the New South Wales State Emergency Service works with the Office of Environment and Heritage and with the councils of local government areas during the development of floodplain or coastal risk management studies and plans, and is regularly consulted by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure during strategic work at the level of growth centres and changes to flood-specific aspects of the New South Wales land use planning policy.

The New South Wales State Emergency Service considers it is most effective for the Service to be involved in strategic land use planning rather than considering individual site-specific development applications. Its major focus during assessment is on risk to life with a particular emphasis on warning and evacuation issues. The service, in consultation with Department of Planning and Infrastructure and Office of Environment and Heritage, is developing comprehensive flood evacuation capacity assessment guidelines for use by local government or private professionals to ensure proper assessment of evacuation during the subdivision planning and application process.

NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

On 22 August 2012 Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Transport, a question without notice regarding the North West Rail Link. The acting Minister for Transport provided the following response:

I am advised:

The North West Rail Link will provide rail access for the first time from the growing north-west region to major employment centres in Norwest Business Park, Macquarie Park, St Leonards, Chatswood, North Sydney and the central business district. It will also include park and ride spaces and bus interchange facilities.

Through the extensive consultation with industry, the community and experts via the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan, and when looking at the best examples overseas, it became clear that delivering the North West Rail Link as part of a future rapid transit system is the best option for all of Sydney.

Rapid transit carries more people per hour than double deckers, is faster, and is best suited for lines where customers get on and off trains at various locations because they can board and alight more quickly—such as the North West Rail Link where workers will travel to Norwest, Epping and Macquarie Park.

TOOMELAH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

On 23 August 2012 the Hon. Jan Barham asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, a question without notice regarding the Toomelah Aboriginal community. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs provided the following response:

1. The Government provides a large and broad range of services and programs to the Aboriginal people of Toomelah delivered locally, some via outreach, and some made available through main regional centres such as Moree, Goondiwindi and Boggabilla. Examples of programs include:
 - Housing for Health program delivered by NSW Health to assess, repair or replace health hardware in homes to ensure safe and healthy living;
 - After School Care Program provided by Toomelah Public School three days per week to provide structured activities for school children;
 - Brighter Future program funded by the Department of Family and Community Services and provided by the Benevolent Society to provide targeted support for families with children at risk, under the age of nine;
 - Partnership Community Program funded by the Aboriginal Affairs to develop community leadership, governance and capacity;
 - Focus Community Program funded by Aboriginal Affairs to support the development of community capacity to address child protection issues; and
 - Crunch and Sip Program run by the Toomelah Public School to provide a set break for students to eat fruit or vegetables and drink water in the classroom.

The New South Wales Government has developed an Interagency Action Plan for a better approach to delivering Government services and programs in Toomelah and Boggabilla. The plan has been developed in response to issues raised at community meetings, held on 5 June and 3 August 2012 between senior officers from New South Wales and Commonwealth governments; Toomelah Boggabilla Elders; and community members.

2. As above.

MEDWAY MINE

On 23 August 2012 the Hon. Robert Brown asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Resources and Energy, a question without notice regarding the Medway Mine. The Minister for Resources and Energy provided the following response:

- (1)-(2) The New South Wales Government recognises the enormous benefits the resources sector delivers to this State, including employment of over 35,000 people directly and nearly 86,000 people indirectly through mine and non-mine related services.

The New South Wales Government will continue to support the ongoing development of the resources sector to ensure its continued expansion and associated economic growth.

The Berrima Colliery employs more than 40 persons directly, with at least twice this number potentially employed indirectly in mine and non mine related service industries in the area.

Based on 2010-11 average weekly earnings figures for New South Wales coal miners, the annual direct wages paid at the Berrima Colliery could exceed \$5 million.

COAL SEAM GAS EXPLORATION

On 23 August 2012 the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Premier, a question without notice regarding coal seam gas exploration. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided the following response:

I am advised:

Details of the Planning Assessment Commission's determination are available on the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's website.

M5 EAST TUNNEL VENTILATION

On 23 August 2012 the Hon. Cate Faehrmann asked the Minister for Roads and Ports a question without notice regarding the M5 East tunnel ventilation. The Minister for Roads and Ports provided the following response:

On 28 August 2012 I announced the New South Wales Government would make publicly available all air pollution data from within the M5 East tunnel and initiate a public education campaign on the matter.

As part of this announcement, the New South Wales Government committed to installing fixed signs on both entrances to the tunnel encouraging motorists to close their windows and use recycled air whilst in the tunnel. The signs will be installed within the next few months.

RURAL AMBULANCE OFFICERS

On 4 September 2012 the Hon. Paul Green asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a question without notice regarding rural ambulance officers. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided the following response:

I am advised by the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research:

The Ambulance Service of NSW proposes to introduce changes to rostering practices in many regional stations to better match paramedic duty hours to known demand, and to address ongoing issues of fatigue among paramedics. Changes to the rosters will be rolled out through a multi-phased approach.

On Tuesday 11 September 2012, Ambulance agreed to postpone phase one of the introduction of eight hour shifts in a small number of rural locations until after 19 October 2012 as a show of good faith, after conciliation with the Health Services Union (East) in the Industrial Relations Commission.

Consultation with paramedics and the Health Services Union (East) is continuing.

COUNTRY RAIL SERVICES

On 4 September 2012 the Hon. Mick Veitch asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Transport, a question without notice regarding country rail services. The Minister for Transport provided the following response:

It is not the Government's policy to privatise CountryLink.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

On 4 September 2012 Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Attorney General, a question without notice regarding child sexual abuse. The Attorney General provided the following response:

I am advised:

The Government is committed to protecting children in the community from sex offenders.

Maximum penalties available for child sex abuse offences under the Crimes Act 1900 are significant and people charged under the current provisions may face long periods in prison.

As the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has lodged an appeal against the sentence of Philip William Doyle it is not appropriate to comment on the matter.

The Regulations which govern referral and assessment for the two-year diversion program known as Cedar Cottage, do not apply in respect of charges laid after 1 September 2012. Corrective Services NSW runs a range of programs that treat adult sex offenders in custody and in the community, including the Custody-based Intensive Treatment program.

To ensure the safety and protection of the community the Crimes (Serious Sex Offenders) Act 2006 provides for extended supervision and continuing detention of serious sex offenders beyond the end of a non-parole period.

In addition, under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000, people convicted of a nominated violent or sexual offence against a child are required to register at a police station. They are also subject to ongoing reporting obligations to police, including reporting changes to certain personal information such as their place of residence or information relating to travel plans.

FIREARMS THEFT

On 5 September 2012 the Hon. Robert Borsak asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a question without notice regarding firearms theft. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided the following response:

The NSW Police Force has advised me that it is normal investigative procedure to investigate any possible links between crimes of a similar nature. Firearm audits were performed on the five properties in question between May 2010 and September 2011.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

On 5 September 2012 the Hon. Robert Brown asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries, a question without notice regarding water infrastructure. The Minister for Primary Industries provided the following response:

There have been significant changes to community expectations, State and Commonwealth legislation, and environmental and regulatory requirements since Welcome Reef Dam was first proposed in 1968.

Information and data that was not previously available, alternative supply and demand management measures and an improved understanding of the adverse environmental, socioeconomic and heritage impacts of a dam at Welcome Reef have changed the viability of this option.

I am advised that the site is one of the drier large storage sites in New South Wales and could take many years to fill. The topography is such that the lake would be relatively shallow with a large surface area (15,300 hectares). The average depth would be 20-25 metres with 600 hectares less than one metre deep. Evaporation rates would be extremely high and there would be a high risk of blue-green algae outbreaks. Climate change models are pointing to greater evaporation rates, increases in temperature and decreases in rainfall in the Welcome Reef catchment.

Environmental impacts will result from inundation of 15,300 ha of land, resulting in flooding of the Shoalhaven and Mongarlowe Rivers, Boro and Reedy Creeks and smaller tributaries.

FORESTS NSW

On 5 September 2012 the Hon. Steve Whan asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries, a question without notice regarding Forests NSW. The Minister for Primary Industries provided the following response:

Corporatisation of Forests NSW will not change the current exemption of dedicated State forests from local government rates because they will remain as Crown land. Local government rates will continue to be paid on State forest areas that are held under a private lease or an occupation permit for private purposes.

BOGGABRI COALMINE

On 5 September 2012 the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Attorney General, a question without notice regarding Boggabri coalmine. The Attorney General provided the following response:

I am advised:

A search of department records has found no record of a representative from the Department of Attorney General and Justice contacting Boggabri police to discuss these matters.

FLOOD LEVEES

On 5 September 2012 the Hon. Paul Green asked the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for the Environment, a question without notice regarding flood levees. The Minister for the Environment provided the following response:

I am advised that this question should be directed to my colleague the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

ADOPTION PRACTICES

On 6 September 2012 the Hon. Jan Barham asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Premier, a question without notice regarding adoption practices. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided the following response:

The Legislative Council has responsibility for the management of submissions to inquiries. I am advised that all submissions are accessible to all members of the Legislative Council.

SOLAR FEED-IN TARIFFS

On 6 September 2012 the Hon. Robert Borsak asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Resources and Energy, a question without notice regarding solar feed-in tariffs. The Minister for Resources and Energy provided the following response:

AGL is a licensed retailer.

There has been no change to the statutory entitlements of New South Wales Solar Bonus Scheme customers, and they will continue to receive their entitlements under the Scheme until it closes on 31 December 2016.

There have been a number of circumstances in which electricity retailers have contacted customers to advise changes to their tariff rates.

One situation is where the tariff paid under the Solar Bonus Scheme drops from 60¢ to 20¢ kW/h. This occurs if:

- a new customer takes over the electricity account at a premises in the Scheme; or
- if a 60¢ customer increases the size of their generator.

AGL advises that a number of customers who were not eligible for Solar Bonus Scheme payments were initially receiving 68¢ kW/h as the company did not have the system functionality to make payments in line with its market offer of 8¢.

The company recently resolved this issue and is advising relevant customers that they will now receive their normal market offer. These customers have not lost an entitlement as they were not eligible for Scheme payments, are not required to pay back any money, and are not financially disadvantaged by virtue of having received the extra payment for a period of time.

This is a matter between the retailer and the customer.

COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS

On 6 September 2012 the Hon. Robert Brown asked the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Local Government, a question without notice regarding council amalgamations. The Minister for Local Government provided the following response:

The local government sector recognises the need to change. It has been working with the State Government as part of the Destination 2036 initiative and asked the Government to establish a review of local government.

The Government established an Independent Local Government Review Panel to investigate and identify options for governance models, structural arrangements and boundary changes for local government in New South Wales. The review will take into consideration the financial sustainability of each local government area. The panel is consulting extensively with councils, communities and other stakeholders to identify the issues and possible solutions. It is due to report to me by July 2013.

In conducting the review, the Panel will take into account the Liberal-National's 2011 election policy of no forced amalgamations.

LEWISHAM OVERPASS BRIDGE

On 6 September 2012 the Hon. Walt Secord asked the Minister for Roads and Ports a question without notice regarding the Lewisham overpass bridge. The Minister for Roads and Ports provided the following response:

I am advised:

Transport for NSW is currently working with the Inner West Light Rail Extension contractor to finalise the detailed construction program and a Construction Traffic Management Plan.

The plan is being developed in consultation with Roads and Maritime Services and the relevant local councils.

It is expected that the impact of the bridge work on Parramatta Road will be minimal, however the plan will outline all traffic management requirements and measures to minimise impact during this work.

Residents, motorists and other community members will be notified well in advance of any construction activities with the potential to impact Parramatta Road.

STRATA BUILDING CODES

On 11 September 2012 Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile asked the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, a question without notice regarding strata building codes. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure provided the following response:

- The fire which occurred in a residential flat building in Bankstown is currently being investigated by the Coroner, Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Building Professionals Board. These investigations will determine the cause of the fire, the issues surrounding the building's construction and any related matters that may have contributed to the events.
- The Government is aware of the research on new strata buildings undertaken by the University of New South Wales.
- The research is presented in a report by the City Futures Team at the University of New South Wales. The report examines the role and responsibility of strata management in property governance and management in urban Australia. I'm informed that the report was developed with assistance from the New South Wales Government, specifically the offices of Fair Trading and Land and Property Information, as well as a number of private companies.

- With respect to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile's questions in relation to this report, I am advised:
 - The City Futures research team asserts that "85 per cent of strata owners in the survey reported defects" in buildings built since 2000, with three quarters of those respondents saying that some of the defects had not been fixed.
 - This figure is based on a small sample of [1,020] owners who participated in the survey. More than 1.2 million people live in strata buildings in New South Wales.
 - These issues are taken seriously by the Government and are being carefully examined as part of the reviews of the Home Building Act and Strata and Community laws that are currently being carried out by Fair Trading.
- The Government is also currently working on a range of reforms aimed at improving the building regulatory system in New South Wales, including:
 - Consideration of better integration of building controls across government by the New South Wales Inter-Departmental Building Regulation Working Party;
 - A response to the Government's Fire Protection Systems Working Party Report that made recommendations regarding the design, certification, implementation and maintenance of fire protection systems and fire safety Alternative Solutions under the Building Code of Australia; and
 - Development of a range of improvements to the building certification system, including better practices, accountability and documentation of decisions that aim to improve consumer protection, compliance of building work and accountability for everyone involved in the system.
- These reforms, combined with the actions initiated by the Minister for Fair Trading, will combine to deliver a more efficient and effective suite of controls for the construction and ongoing life cycle of buildings.

BEEHIVE DESTRUCTION

On 11 September 2012 the Hon. Robert Brown asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a question without notice regarding beehive destruction. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided the following response:

The NSW Police Force has advised me that it is investigating the alleged destruction of 1,600 beehives on the Far North Coast earlier this year through Strike Force Barragoot. This is a complex ongoing investigation and as such it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

BUS VANDALISM

On 11 September 2012 the Hon. Paul Green asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Transport, a question without notice regarding bus vandalism. The Minister for Transport provided the following response:

I am advised:

Vandalism is an equal problem on both State Transit's Sydney and Newcastle bus networks. In Newcastle, 93 per cent of the 60 infringement notices issued in 2011-12 were issued to two repeat offenders.

There is no difference in the approach adopted by State Transit to control graffiti and etching vandalism on its Sydney and Newcastle bus networks. State Transit is continually improving its strategies to detect offenders and to combat vandalism.

State Transit staff work very closely with NSW Police, including the new Police Transport Command. Closed-circuit television security cameras installed on all State Transit buses play a vital role in assisting with the detection and prosecution of offenders.

BEEHIVE DESTRUCTION

On 12 September 2012 the Hon. Robert Brown asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a question without notice regarding beehive destruction. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services provided the following response:

As advised in my response to the member's previous question on this matter, the NSW Police Force has advised me that it is investigating the alleged destruction of 1,600 beehives on the Far North Coast earlier this year through Strike Force Barragoot. This is a complex ongoing investigation and as such it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

COAL SEAM GAS EXPLORATION

On 13 September 2012 the Hon. Paul Green asked the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Resources and Energy, a question without notice regarding coal seam gas exploration. The Minister for Resources and Energy provided the following response:

- (1)-(2) The New South Wales Government has lifted the moratorium on hydraulic fracturing—which applied to new approvals—following completion of the independent review process. Existing standards for fracturing and well design have been strengthened to ensure world's best practice, as overseen by the New South Wales Chief Scientist and Engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane.

The New South Wales Government has released the Code of Practice for Coal Seam Gas Fracture Stimulation as part of the Strategic Regional Land Use Policy.

The code requires the identification and public reporting of all chemicals to be injected as part of the fracture stimulation process, the volumes and concentrations of those chemicals, as well as potential risks to water quality and human health arising from exposure to those chemicals.

This information will be published on the Division of Resources and Energy website.

Fracturing applications are assessed by ORE, Environment Protection Authority, Office of Environment and Heritage and the New South Wales Office of Water.

Hydraulic fracturing has been utilised for over 65 years in gas and oil production globally and for over 40 years in Australia, and is also used as an essential safety measure in some underground coal mines.

Questions without notice concluded.

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, AND MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Ministerial Statement

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [5.04 p.m.]: Members would be aware—

[Interruption]

Is the Leader of the Opposition taking his time writing his acceptance speech for an Ernie this year? The Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business was involved—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Members would be aware that the Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business was involved in a car accident on Saturday. She has been advised by her doctors to take the week off. Both the Minister and her driver are okay but she certainly needs the week off. I am aware that some answers to questions on notice and questions without notice are due this week, but I am sure all members will understand if those answers are delayed.

SNOWY MOUNTAINS CLOUD SEEDING TRIAL AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher.

Motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher agreed to:

That standing orders be suspended to allow the passing of the bill through all its remaining stages during the present or any one sitting of the House.

Second reading set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

LAW REFORM COMMISSION

Report

The Hon. David Clarke tabled, pursuant to the Law Reform Commission Act 1967, the report for the year ended 30 June 2012.

Ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. David Clarke.

MEMBERS WEARING OF BADGES

The PRESIDENT: During question time the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps took a point of order in relation to the size of badges, which I said I would rule on later. The rulings that have been consistently applied by Presidents—commencing with Deputy-President Gay, who I believe made the original ruling, and followed, on a number of occasions, by Dr Meredith Burgmann—were well articulated. Members can refer to the selected rulings of the Presidents to see those rulings. I will continue to rule in the same way in terms of members wearing badges in the Chamber—that is, the size of badges worn in the House should not exceed the size of the

Legislative Council badge. I acknowledge that my colleague the Deputy-President has already made that ruling in the Fifty-fifth Parliament. As commemorative ribbons are generally worn for just one day I do not propose to consider them to be a badge under the terms of this ruling.

COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report: Review of the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 Annual Reports of the Independent Commission Against Corruption

Debate resumed from 21 June 2012.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [5.06 p.m.]: As a longstanding member of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption, I am pleased to speak on report No. 2/55, "Review of the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 Annual Reports of the Independent Commission Against Corruption", dated June 2012. This is the committee's first review of the Independent Commission Against Corruption's annual reports for this Parliament, under the chairmanship of a new chair. Mark Speakman, who is a Senior Counsel and a member of the lower House, was appointed as chair and is carrying out his role in a professional manner.

In its review of the Independent Commission Against Corruption reports, the committee examined operational matters, the commission's development of policies and procedures for referrals to agencies under sections 53 and 54 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, the commission's investigation practices and corruption prevention projects, and investigations targeting high-risk areas. The committee has always been supportive of the Independent Commission Against Corruption when it indicates that it needs additional funding to carry out its important role. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has had the support of this parliamentary committee in terms of additional funding so as to increase its efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of its functions.

The extra funding will allow for the recruitment of additional staff. Sadly, because of the number of areas involving corruption, the commission's role has become increasingly important and it has experienced heavy demands on its staff and its functions. The committee was pleased to support the provision of increased funding for the Independent Commission Against Corruption, which has been granted, to enable the commission to acquire additional resourcing for its planned information and communications technology upgrade and an upgrade of its telephone interception infrastructure. The committee also reviewed the policies and procedures of the Independent Commission Against Corruption for referrals to agencies under sections 53 and 54 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has made ongoing efforts to implement comprehensive processes, procedures and communication tools for effective oversight of referrals to agencies under sections 53 and 54.

One area that I have been concerned about over many years is that, in spite of all the hard work by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, it does not seem to bear fruit in the form of prosecutions and convictions by the Director of Public Prosecutions. It would appear that the Independent Commission Against Corruption to the Director of Public Prosecutions does not provide material in sufficient quantity or of sufficient quality to allow the director to prosecute. The committee has discussed this problem for many years and has finally come upon a solution whereby the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Director of Public Prosecutions have improved the cooperation between their organisations that is vital in preventing the delays that have been of concern in the past.

In this context the committee also noted that section 14 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 was amended in September 2011 to clarify the powers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption to gather and assemble admissible evidence for the prosecution of a person for a criminal offence after the discontinuance or completion of its investigations. There is no use having the Independent Commission Against Corruption identify corruption if the individuals concerned are not prosecuted. Hopefully that breakdown in the system will no longer occur. The Independent Commission Against Corruption obtained approval, on a recurrent basis, for additional annual funding of \$2.2 million, which applied from 2011. This enabled the Independent Commission Against Corruption to increase its staffing by 11 officers and to meet the increased recurring external legal fees caused by the increase in the number of public inquiries by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I congratulate the Independent Commission Against Corruption on increasing its activities by conducting those important additional public inquiries.

The balance in funding was used for associated operating expenditure, including upgrading the surveillance equipment base of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I asked what that meant and

the Commissioner for the Independent Commission Against Corruption indicated that, as it was very important equipment in combating corruption, he did not wish to explain how efficient it would be. I accept his word that the equipment is essential. However, we do not want to alert individuals who may be considering some corrupt activity to the new surveillance equipment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. We will have to leave it to our imaginations or to science programs on the television, but I assume it will be effective in enabling the Independent Commission Against Corruption to carry out its role. The extra funding will also enhance information technology capability and support and provide additional office space for extra staff.

When appearing before the committee the Independent Commission Against Corruption representatives took the opportunity to raise some areas of frustration. One frustration was restrictions on using the NSW Police Computerised Operational Policing System [COPS] database. The database contains information on criminal convictions, court appearances, use of aliases and relevant background intelligence. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has an agreement with the NSW Police Force that allows it to access the Computerised Operational Policing System database when conducting its investigations. However, the Independent Commission Against Corruption is not allowed to use the database for assessing the suitability of applicants for employment by the commission. The commissioner stated:

Whether an applicant has a criminal history, the nature of any criminal history, and background criminal intelligence are important elements in determining the applicant's suitability for employment by the Commission.

It will be obvious to all members that it is essential that anyone employed by the Independent Commission Against Corruption is of the highest integrity and honesty. They must not have the slightest slur of criminal activity or corruption against their character. It is essential that the Independent Commission Against Corruption obtains approval to use the Computerised Operational Policing System database in order to investigate applicants who apply to work for it. The inability to use the database for the purpose of vetting employees poses a significant security risk and is delaying security vetting.

The parliamentary committee is anxious to change this situation. It will probably require legislation to allow the Independent Commission Against Corruption to use the equipment when vetting job applicants. I draw that to the attention of the Government—which I assume is already aware of the situation—and to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher. It is a privilege to serve on the parliamentary Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I am pleased to see that the organisation has improved its activities and public inquiries and achieved success in many areas where there has been corruption involving government departments, individuals and organisations. I congratulate the commissioner and his staff.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ [5.16 p.m.]: I also thank the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and his staff for their attendance at the committee hearings. I particularly thank Dr Waldersee for taking the time to visit me at Parliament House to discuss further the procurement report that came up in our discussions with the commissioner. While I still fundamentally disagree on the difference between the perception and the actual reporting involved, I appreciate their efforts and openness in discussing the survey results and the publication of those results. I raised another issue regarding the annual report and the commissioner's references to lobbying investigations during the year. He stated that he had made 17 recommendations for change to government. In following up that issue, I asked the commissioner how precisely "government officials" were defined in his report and whether, for example, a person who is paid a retainer by government to sit on a board that directly advises government is covered by this legislation. The commissioner could not recall the exact definition but said he did not think so.

However, the commissioner went on to state that there would be no requirement to keep a lobbying register or for officers to stand aside and notify anyone if, for example, the companies they were involved in had been lobbying the Government. Indeed, the report defines a "government representative" as a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, ministerial staff member or a person employed, contracted or engaged in a public sector agency under the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 other than staff employed under section 33. That definition does not appear to refer to anyone appointed to government boards. We may need to consider this question further. I was conscious during estimates hearings that organisations such as regional tourism organisations hand out government funds and grants yet there is no obligation on them to keep lobbying registers or to notify when companies have approached them.

One would think that even organisations such as Infrastructure NSW that are directing major capital works for the Government perhaps should be covered by the lobbying regulations. As far as I can see they are not covered by the recommendations of the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. It is an area that perhaps should be looked at, given there is a tendency within certain portfolios to have a more

arm's length approach to board appointments and the issuing of government money, to ascertain whether lobbying is having any influence in that respect. Apart from that, I thank the commissioner and his staff for their time and the committee staff for their assistance during the year and in preparing these reports.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR [5.20 p.m.]: As a member of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption I thank the commissioner and his staff for their attendance at the hearings and particularly for the annual report. I note that it was an unusual situation because we looked at two annual reports in the one day. That was a carryover from the transition to a new government and interests were best served by holding over the first annual report and dealing with both reports together. There will be a debate on the second report shortly. I thank the commissioner and his staff for their efforts and also thank the committee secretariat for their work during the inquiry and in preparing the report. Other members have dealt with specific matters that I do not need to repeat.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report: Review of the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 Annual Reports of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption

Debate resumed from 21 June 2012.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [5.22 p.m.]: I am pleased as a member of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption to speak to report No. 2/55 of June 2012, which is entitled "Review of the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 Annual Reports of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption". As members will know, the Office of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption is a new development. This is the first annual report to Parliament of the committee, which reviewed the office of the inspector. As I mentioned earlier, the committee is under the chairmanship of Mark Speakman, Senior Counsel, and a member of the other place. The committee considered the inspector's annual reports for 2009-10 and 2010-11, focusing on amendments to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 and changes in the way in which the inspector performs his complaints handling role.

I am very pleased that when the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption makes recommendations to the Government they are implemented. Recent amendments to the reporting provisions of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption have implemented recommendations made by the previous committee. The committee is pleased to note that the inspector's discretion to report on any of his functions has been clarified to remove any ambiguity about his power to report to Parliament and to other parties. Because the office of the inspector is a new development, as is occurring in other areas, it takes time to work out the inspector's role and his powers. There was some doubt as to how he should report and to whom.

A further amendment to the Act, requested by the inspector, ensures that the inspector is able to access information to conduct audits of the commission's applications for and use of surveillance devices warrants. This is a very important coercive power of the commission and it can use those powers to investigate corruption. It also means there is a tension with the inspector's powers to audit the commission's use of its powers in this area. We are pleased that that is progressing. The committee has noted the introduction of a more centralised complaints handling process role by the inspector whereby he has assumed primary responsibility for handling complaints.

The new procedures introduced by the inspector have had benefits, which include increased efficiency and productivity and greater flexibility in dealing with complaints. The committee has also noted that the change has enabled the inspector to take a more direct role in this aspect of his functions, without it having resulted in a significant increase in his workload. The committee appreciates the work of the inspector, Mr Cooper, and his staff and their cooperation throughout the review. I mentioned earlier the issue of the inspector's ability to report on the performance of his functions and to whom he reports. The committee supported amendments to the Act and made the following recommendation:

That the Premier, as Minister with responsibility for the administration of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*, consider bringing forward amendments to the Act, to clarify that:

Reports to Parliament

The Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption may report to Parliament, as he considers necessary, on any abuse of power, impropriety, maladministration and other forms of misconduct on the part of the ICAC or its officers, regardless of whether or not these matters arise from the making of a complaint to the Inspector.

The Inspector may report to Parliament on any of his statutory functions, as considered necessary and, in doing so may utilise the special reporting provisions at section 77A of the Act.

I am sure it is obvious to all members that the inspector must have the opportunity to carry out his role and also be able to report on his role and activities, especially if there are matters that affect the Independent Commission Against Corruption. If there is any abuse of power or misconduct those matters should be brought promptly to the attention of Parliament. In regard to reports to other parties the committee made the following recommendation:

Reports made by the Inspector under sections 57B (1) (b) and (c) in relation to complaints or matters that are not of a sufficiently serious or systemic nature to warrant being made to Parliament, can be provided to complainants, affected parties and other relevant individuals, as considered necessary by the Inspector for the purpose of resolving the complaint or matter in question.

I am pleased that a number of the committee's recommendations have been adopted and that the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act has been amended in regard to the principal functions of the inspector and special reports. With regard to the ability of the inspector to carry out his role, the committee supported proposed amendments to legislation and the Act was amended in September 2011 to provide that the prohibitions on use, communication and publication of protected information under the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 do not apply to the inspector's exercise of his functions under section 57B of the Act.

The amendment implements the recommendations in the committee's previous report. This amendment to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act will enable the inspector to better carry out his duties. The Surveillance Devices Act 2007 has a great number of restrictions on access to those devices or information about those devices. It is important that the inspector is exempt from those controls because of the nature of his appointment and the role he undertakes.

The amendments were initiated by the inspector in his 2008-09 annual report where he outlined inconsistencies between the two Acts in that provisions in the Surveillance Devices Act prevented him from performing key functions under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. Further, the inspector has repeatedly raised provisions in the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 which again prevent the Independent Commission Against Corruption from providing information that is required in order for the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption to perform his duties in relation to applications for and the use of telephone intercepts. The committee has again supported the inspector's suggested amendments to that Act. An inspector appointed to a new position needs time to finalise and clarify his powers to ensure he can properly carry out his role. I am pleased that the Government has supported the initiatives and the inspector will be able to properly carry out his important role.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption was established to prevent corruption. But no organisation should be above observation and checks and that was the reason for the creation of the inspector. We must ensure no restrictions are placed on the inspector that would hinder him in carrying out his duties. I am sure these additional powers will not be abused and will be used by the inspector only when necessary to carry out his duties. Any abuse of powers would be contrary to the position of Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I am pleased with the progress that has been made and I look forward to the inspector carrying out his duties to the fullest extent. I acknowledge the work of the inspector and congratulate him on his efforts. I commend the report to the House.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR [5.32 p.m.]: As a member of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Committee, I will make a short contribution to this debate. I commend the way in which this inquiry was conducted under the chairmanship of Mr Mark Speakman, MP, and I thank the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and his staff for their contribution to the inquiry. It is reassuring to know that the inspector has oversight of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. After getting to know Mr Cooper through this process, I have confidence that his work is of the highest quality and he gives attention to detail in all areas. The people of New South Wales can take comfort in the work of Mr Cooper in his oversight of operations as the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Once again, I thank the secretariat, the chair and the members of the Independent Commission Against Corruption committee. I also thank the inspector and his staff for the work they do.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [5.34 p.m.], in reply: I thank the House for the opportunity to consider the inspector's report. I commend the report to members and urge them to read it, if they have not done so already.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

Report: Domestic Violence Trends and Issues in NSW

Debate resumed from 4 September 2012.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR [5.35 p.m.]: Domestic violence is a blight on our society and an issue for which we must all take responsibility to address in all aspects of our community. Domestic violence is a family problem, a personal problem, a destructive social issue and a serious crime. It is a violation of trust within people's closest relationships, with intimate partners and family members. Domestic violence has a deeply harmful effect on victims and children. Domestic violence is a breach of our human right to freedom from gender-based violence. It is linked to death, physical and mental ill health, disability, child abuse and homelessness. Domestic violence has been estimated to cost the New South Wales economy \$4.5 billion each year.

The momentum is gathering for a comprehensive, new approach to domestic violence in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government is moving to develop a strategic framework for preventing and responding to domestic violence across the State. The inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues in New South Wales was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Issues by the Hon. Pru Goward, Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women, on 18 June 2011. During the inquiry the committee received 80 submissions and held six hearings in public and one hearing in camera. The committee conducted site visits to two local courts and to Forbes in the central west of New South Wales where we held briefings with a range of police, legal, health and community sector stakeholders. We also visited Victoria to meet with various representatives of that State's highly regarded system for responding to domestic violence.

The committee's gathering of evidence culminated in an innovative and highly successful roundtable discussion with 19 key stakeholder inquiry participants in order to gather considered feedback on possible recommendations for the inquiry. In undertaking the inquiry, the committee sought to identify priorities and imperatives informed through extensive consultation with stakeholders in order to ensure that future action by Government addresses the key issues in the appropriate way.

While this inquiry was primarily focused on systems, services and programs, it was fundamentally concerned with violence within intimate partner relationships and families. The inquiry highlighted to the committee that both government and non-government service providers must focus on addressing people's needs in a timely, holistic and individualised way. The providers have a responsibility to ensure that they are engaging with and assisting victims, children and perpetrators as effectively as possible. They must work together towards the common goals of safety and freedom from violence for victims and children, and accountability and a change to non-violent behaviour on the part of perpetrators.

The committee agreed with the near consensus view among inquiry participants that domestic violence is inherently a gender crime, with the majority of violence perpetrated on women by men. Make no mistake about it: domestic violence is predominantly committed by male perpetrators towards female victims. This is backed by State, national and international studies and is rightly recognised in policy and legislation. At the same time, there are male victims and female perpetrators. The committee considers that while it must recognise the gender nature of domestic violence, a system for preventing and responding to such violence needs to take account of and be effective for all victims and perpetrators.

The committee welcomes a Government commitment to develop a New South Wales domestic violence framework. Together, the findings of the Auditor-General and the views of a wide range of inquiry participants highlight the substantial need to pursue comprehensive systemic reform in relation to domestic violence. The committee encourages the Government to embrace this opportunity for wholesale improvements under the umbrella of the framework. An ambitious, well-resourced strategy will provide a vision which is necessary to drive the comprehensive reforms forward over time. The committee considers that the imperative for reform is so significant as to justify a further inquiry on our part to conduct a review in two years in relation to the progress made in respect of our recommendations.

It is our view that the domestic violence framework should be built on three core principles. First and foremost, it should embody the principle that domestic violence in all its forms is completely unacceptable and that as a society we must make an ongoing effort to eradicate it. There must be a new focus on victims within the domestic violence system. Evidence presented to the committee indicated that the system now works in silos, is patchy and lacks leadership, with outcomes for victims constrained by system requirements. It has also

been overly focused on criminal justice interventions at the expense of victim supports. Thus the framework must reflect a second principle that people's needs are paramount, that the system exists to address those needs and that all agencies and workers have a responsibility to respond to those needs in a timely, flexible, holistic and individualised way.

The third principle is a focus on outcomes. All of the committee's recommendations are designed to enhance a practical focus on the needs of and outcomes for the individuals affected by domestic violence. Most significantly, we must deliver safety and freedom from violence for victims and children and accountability and a change to non-violent behaviour on the part of perpetrators. Every service that plays a role in the domestic violence system—whether it be a police station, a local court, a refuge, an emergency department or a women's health centre—should be focused on these goals and be integrated with other services in achieving those outcomes.

The right leadership and governance arrangements will be critical to the success of the reforms. The committee recommends that governance of the domestic violence framework be led by a Premier's ministerial council including Ministers responsible for the portfolios of Women, Family and Community Services, Attorney General, Justice, Police, Health, Housing and Education. The ministerial council would be an oversight committee that ensures that all the agencies with a role in the framework act in a coordinated way to fulfil their respective responsibilities. Government must also formalise the role of non-government organisations in decision-making by allowing them to take their rightful place in a new statewide steering committee for the framework. The committee strongly believes that just as there needs to be a comprehensive new approach to domestic violence in New South Wales, within that approach the Government must invest in a long-term and strategic commitment to prevention and early intervention that includes primary prevention measures.

Given the strong evidence that domestic violence is inherently gendered, the committee considers that addressing the causes of violence against women must form the basis of any prevention strategy. This should be complemented by targeted prevention strategies focusing on specific population groups. The committee calls for specific evidence-based strategies to address the link between alcohol and domestic violence predicated on the acknowledgement of a link between the two and a commitment to fund further research into the role that alcohol plays in the frequency, severity and effects of domestic violence. The committee recognises that many of the recommendations will give rise to an increase in demand for tertiary services for victims and children. If victims are more aware of the supports available to them and if they and their children are more effectively engaged in the system and referred by service providers for additional support, it is critical that there be adequate services to meet their needs. The committee heard that many services for victims, and especially for children, are already in very short supply. It is also vital that there be a menu of options available to respond to those various needs.

The NSW Police Force will be the key to the success of the new approach to domestic violence. While the NSW Police Force has achieved significant improvements in practices in recent years, further improvements are required in the consistency of responses, responses to breaches and responses in rural and remote areas. These issues should be addressed via enhancements to leadership, training and quality assurance. In addition, domestic violence liaison officer positions should be funded on the basis of a policy for allocating those positions across the State. Greater research, data collection and monitoring will be essential for a better understanding of the trend of increased arrests of women and appropriate responses to it. The inquiry also presented an opportunity for the Government to rethink what relationships should and should not be classified as "domestic" in the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. The committee believes that the Act should reflect that domestic violence occurs between people in family or family-like relationships. At the same time, owing to the unique vulnerability of people with a disability to abuse, neglect and exploitation, there should be no dilution of existing protections for that group.

The committee strongly believes that the apprehended domestic violence order system as a whole requires improvement. Ensuring apprehended domestic violence order conditions are workable and realistic and that respondents understand those conditions will fundamentally decrease the likelihood of breaches. The committee is not convinced that global positioning system technology for people subject to an apprehended domestic violence order, which is not a criminal charge or offence, demonstrates a tangible benefit to victims of domestic violence. Accordingly, the committee recommends that the Government not pursue at this time the use of global positioning system bracelets to reduce breaches and improve compliance with apprehended domestic violence orders. The committee believes that greater availability of advice for respondents, whether through a lawyer or court support worker, will reduce breaches and improve compliance with apprehended domestic violence orders. It recommends that the Attorney General work towards implementing a best practice respondent legal advice and support program across New South Wales local courts.

The committee also believes that court support services should be enhanced so that every court in New South Wales has the same minimum standard of supports available to victims of domestic violence, including that at least one court support worker and one domestic violence liaison officer be dedicated to every local court on domestic violence list days. While the establishment of standalone domestic violence courts is neither feasible nor practical at this time, the committee sees great value in implementing elements of the Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model across the State and the use of domestic violence lists in all local courts. In addition, it recommends that the Attorney General work with local courts to establish safe rooms in all court facilities. New technological and legal capacity is required to permit information sharing between New South Wales courts and the Family Court so that magistrates and judges in our courts are better able to ensure that family law orders and apprehended domestic violence orders are consistent.

While there is already a range of penalties available for domestic violence offences, the committee recommends a review of alternative sentencing options for domestic violence offences—for example, referral to mediation, support services, treatment programs, counselling, and educational or rehabilitative programs. The committee calls on the Government to develop effective intervention programs for perpetrators of domestic violence based on thorough research and systemic trial and evaluation. Funding for perpetrator programs should also not be at the expense of victims' services and programs. Finally, the committee recommends that as part of the domestic violence framework the Government expand the availability of support services for child perpetrators and their families across the State.

On behalf of the committee, I express our gratitude to all who participated in the inquiry: the non-government stakeholders who shared their practical wisdom and knowledge; the government agencies that took part in good faith; and the victims who revealed their very personal experiences and unique insights into how the system should work. I also thank my committee colleagues for the substantial work they did and their personal commitment to this demanding inquiry. Each has brought a very valuable perspective and the comprehensiveness of the report is a reflection of their dedication to addressing this critical social problem. I know that at times it has been difficult for some members because of their personal experiences. I thank them for their dedication to the cause and their commitment to reading all of the information provided. Not one committee member participated in the deliberations without having done the appropriate research or without a commitment to the task. I thank them sincerely for that effort.

I also thank the committee secretariat for their professionalism, work ethic and determination that this report should reflect the truth of domestic violence and offer recommendations that will lead to real change for victims. The secretariat has worked tirelessly to sift through the reams of information about this contentious issue, including the many submissions. Their attention to detail ensured that the committee members were in a position to make informed decisions and judgements. I will name them during my contribution in reply to this debate. I also take this opportunity to thank the Hansard reporters. An enormous amount of information was conveyed at the many meetings the committee held and the acronyms used throughout the inquiry were difficult to understand. The roundtable discussion involving 17 different stakeholders would have been particularly challenging. I thank them for their dedication throughout the inquiry.

The committee urges the Government to pursue reforms across the policing, court and service systems, matched with a much greater focus on prevention and early intervention. Not to do so would be to miss an opportunity. As I said, domestic violence is a blight on our society and we must all take responsibility for it. It must be stamped out in the workplace, in our homes and in everything we do. We all have a responsibility to ensure that this social issue is addressed and that we achieve more in this State. I hope that this report is the beginning of that change.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN [5.50 p.m.]: As a member of the Standing Committee on Social Issues, it was very satisfying to be a part of this tough inquiry into domestic violence. There was an extraordinary amount of dedication shown by all members of the committee and the secretariat to bring about this inquiry. I believe the committee's recommendations will be a game changer. Everyone we spoke to, every witness, whether from the NSW Police Force, the courts and non-government organisations or the victims themselves, showed dedication and had a determination to ensure that the committee made the best possible recommendations. They shared their thoughts, ideas and expertise on this issue. Everyone was determined that this would be a significant report on the New South Wales political landscape.

The initial terms of reference of the committee were slightly limiting. Even the title of the report, "Domestic violence trends and issues in NSW", does not do justice to the report. It is much more than simply a report on domestic violence trends and issues in New South Wales. It has made 89 wide ranging

recommendations urging the Government to change its entire approach to tackling domestic violence in New South Wales. The report asks that the Government treat domestic violence with the seriousness it deserves and that real leadership be shown on this issue by all sides of politics.

The inquiry was undertaken with a great degree of thoroughness and consultation. The committee treated with respect the victims, the organisations that do such incredible work in this area, and the very good people who try to tackle domestic violence. Those people not only work in that sector as a career choice but also dedicate their lives to helping particularly the victims of domestic violence, often women and children. There are also those who work with perpetrators of domestic violence to ensure that, as much as possible, they change their ways.

I acknowledge the chair's foreword, which is an excellent summary of the issues and one that I support. In the short time I have available to speak to this report, I particularly urge the Government to examine Recommendation 2, which refers to cross-party commitment. Clearly, we have cross-party commitment to addressing domestic violence, but this is about cross-party commitment to comprehensive reform of the domestic violence system and to the forthcoming domestic and family violence framework. The 89 recommendations are a complete and serious change in the way this State will deal with domestic violence, from prevention to early intervention, services, courts and policing. I urge all parties, particularly the Australian Labor Party and the Liberal-Nationals Government, to ensure cross-party commitment to comprehensive reform.

Recommendation 3 is an important recommendation. It is essential that adequate resources are allocated to the forthcoming framework so that these urgently needed recommendations bring about reform in New South Wales. The resources are required for services and to ensure that the framework is implemented at every level, as recommended by this report. Recommendation 4 is also very important. It states that in two years the Government refer terms of reference to the Standing Committee on Social Issues to review the progress made in respect to these recommendations. That is a clear indication that the social issues committee is determined to inquire into the progress made in relation to this report so as to ensure that the Government has adopted and acted upon the recommendations. I am hopeful that the Standing Committee on Social Issues has a great deal to review in two years time.

Recommendation 6 suggests that the framework be underpinned by three core policy principles. This is also an important recommendation. The first core policy principle is that domestic violence in all its forms is completely unacceptable and as a society we must make an ongoing effort to eradicate its occurrence. The second is that the needs of people are paramount and agencies and workers across the system have a responsibility to respond to needs in a timely, holistic and individualised way. Lastly, the system should be focused on the outcomes of safety and freedom from violence for victims and children and accountability and non-violent behaviour on the part of perpetrators. Too often during the inquiry the committee heard that the system is focused on criminal justice interventions rather than on victim supports and early intervention. This report strongly recommends that we change our approach from dealing with it at the end of the line—once it has happened and it is within the court system—to tackling domestic violence.

I believe the most significant recommendation is Recommendation 10—that is, that a ministerial council be established comprising the Premier as well as the Ministers for the portfolios of Women, Family and Community Services, Attorney General, Justice, Police, Health, Housing and Education. This issue requires leadership at the highest level. The committee heard about the decision in Victoria to prioritise, address and reduce the frequency and severity of domestic violence. Victoria prioritised support for victims and introduced an integrated approach across government. For New South Wales to give this report the serious consideration it deserves, it is absolutely critical that we have leadership at the highest levels of government, not just by the Minister for Women.

Importantly, the report outlines what the Government needs to do to provide leadership. I hope the work of all involved is rewarded by a strong Government response to it and that leadership at the highest level will say that addressing domestic violence will become one of its highest priorities. If that does not happen, domestic violence will not be addressed or seriously dealt with. I urge the Government to give this report the seriousness it deserves. The Greens support and commend the report to the House.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY [6.00 p.m.]: I make a contribution to the take-note debate on report No. 46 of the Standing Committee on Social Issues entitled, "Domestic violence trends and issues in New South Wales". This significant report is 498 pages long and—I stand to be corrected on this—is very close to being the

largest report ever produced by a New South Wales Legislative Council standing committee. The committee did not begin with the intention of producing a report this size but, under the able chairmanship of the Hon. Niall Blair and the cooperative work of the committee members, the more we dug, the more we found. It was agreed that the range of issues and associated matters arising from the inquiry into domestic violence in this State should be brought together in this report.

It may have been possible to produce a smaller report, but it is hoped that the report will become a source of reference for members of this Parliament, policymakers, bureaucrats and those who deal with domestic violence outside the Parliament. Indeed, this document is deserved of reading by the general community. People may feel daunted by its size but there can be no doubt that domestic violence is a scourge in our community. All of us, irrespective of who we are, can play a role in speaking out or acting in whatever way we can to make it very clear that domestic violence is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. I encourage people in the community to at the very least read the executive summary of the report.

The Hon. Cate Faehrmann: All members of Parliament should read it.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I note the interjection of the Hon. Cate Faehrmann. All members of Parliament should read the report. It will be a sobering exercise for people to work their way through the report. It will give them an insight into something that unless one has been a recipient or a perpetrator of domestic violence or, alternatively, knows someone who has been a recipient or perpetrator of domestic violence, one cannot really understand it. We hear of it as something in the background and we know it goes on. It is not until one grinds through the cold, hard facts of reality that one is sobered by what some people are exposed to. To some extent that was my experience. I have never been a first-hand observer of domestic violence, although many have spoken to me about it. I found the exposure to the heartfelt testament by witnesses who gave evidence or made submissions gave me an insight into an area that I, as a male, feel very sad about.

Uncontradictably, the majority of acts of domestic violence are perpetrated by males towards females. Probably a reasonable number of my male friends or mates I have grown up with may have been directly involved with domestic violence. That causes me to sit back and wonder why that has come about. We call ourselves an enlightened society—one that supposedly treats people with respect and dignity—yet something so dark has been uncovered in this inquiry. The cause of domestic violence is a serious issue yet, having sat through the inquiry, I am still unclear as to why domestic violence is perpetrated to the degree it is. I do not fully comprehend why males do this. We can speculate but more work needs to be done in order to comprehend the reasons for it. There is no justification for domestic violence. If one accepts the proposition that domestic violence is unacceptable, we need to understand the reasons proffered for its justification. We then should put those reasons on the table and individually dismiss them as unacceptable. We need to deal with those reasons that sometimes may be unspoken about as justification for domestic violence.

The 89 recommendations contained in the report are very important. The Hon. Niall Blair and the Hon. Cate Faehrmann have spoken about some of the more important recommendations, and I concur with their comments. I refer in particular to recommendation No. 8, which deals with resourcing to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. This truly independent organisation, which conducts high-quality research into crime statistics in this State, should be given a specific brief to research the issue of domestic violence and report regularly on it. That research will then inform those in decision-making positions who draft laws or amendments to laws, as well as those involved in policy making.

Recommendation No. 1 of the report deals with the development of the framework. It is important that the KPMG report, which was produced to inform the Victorian Government about how it should develop its domestic violence framework, is an important point of reference. I understand that the New South Wales Government is looking at it, but I hope it is not just picked up by this Government—I hope that is not the intention. It is important that the material covered in the committee's report should be fully understood and taken into account as the key point of reference in developing the new domestic violence framework, which it is hoped will be announced as soon as practicable. I understand that will be sometime in the New Year.

I could say much more but I am almost out of time. In conclusion, I thank my colleagues. Once again I acknowledge the astute and patient chairmanship of the Hon. Niall Blair. My colleagues worked together in a collegial way on a matter about which we feel strongly. We hope that the Government will look at the recommendations carefully and implement the vast majority of them. I thank the secretariat for its sterling work in putting together the report and I thank Hansard. I commend the report to the House. I urge members to take the time to read the report and not be daunted by its size.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [6.10 p.m.]: I speak in support of the report of the Standing Committee on Social Issues on the inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues in New South Wales. I begin by acknowledging and thanking people for their contribution to what was a comprehensive inquiry and what is a well-structured and well-argued report. I believe all committee members are happy to support the committee's recommendations. I thank the Minister, the Hon. Pru Goward, for referring the domestic violence issue to the committee for an inquiry. I particularly commend the committee secretariat for their hard work in preparing this report. They assisted us by ensuring that we had a process that met the demands of this complex social issue, and they assisted the chair to provide a comprehensive report to the Parliament. I acknowledge Rachel Simpson, Merrin Thompson, Miriam Cullen, Kate Mihaljek, Lisa Scheikowski and Shu-Fang Wei for their hard work, dedication and professional approach to the inquiry and preparation of the report.

I thank my committee colleagues, the Hon. Niall Blair, who is a competent and fair chair, the Hon. Catherine Cusack, the Hon. Greg Donnelly, the Hon. Cate Faehrmann and the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones for their willingness to approach this serious social and criminal issue in a multipartisan or cross-party way. The process, to which we all agreed, was useful for an inquiry into such a complex social issue. As other members noted, the submissions, hearings, forums, site visits, visits to other jurisdictions and roundtable discussion with stakeholders assisted us to understand the characteristics of domestic violence and the impact of domestic violence on the lives of women, children, men and families. They also helped us in preparing our report to the Parliament and the recommendations.

I know, having consulted and discussed the recommendations with a number of victim advocacy groups and people working in the women's health and domestic violence counselling sector, that they are happy with the committee's recommendations. One important area for all of us—other members talked about this—is the cause of domestic violence. It is important for all of us to understand the cause of domestic violence, particularly at this time with the discussion that is taking place in our nation. Page 99 of the report states:

Domestic violence is the result of a fundamental power imbalance between two people involved in the relationship. Primarily it is because of the gender imbalance/inequity between men and women which is still so prevalent in our society. Men hold the power and women don't and this is carried through to the domestic sphere.

We must understand that that is fundamental to the cause of domestic violence. Most importantly, I have worked in this sector and I have seen the impact of domestic violence on the lives of women and children. It is worth remembering that domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness among women and children. I and other workers have seen the range of horrendous physical injuries to women and children, the extreme cases where women have been set on fire, murdered, kicked to the ground and continued to be kicked, taken to with a weapon, continually slapped across the face and had their liberty taken away. All of those crimes against women and children have a terrible impact both physically and psychologically. If we do not address domestic violence not only will the pain continue; we will allow that cycle of domestic violence to continue.

Regrettably, it is often the victims of domestic violence, who observed it during their lifetime, particularly as children, who go on to become perpetrators of domestic violence. There are good reasons why as a society we must understand the causes of domestic violence. We must put in place policies, programs and resources that will reduce domestic violence and, I hope, eliminate it one day. For me, the key findings relate to leadership—other members have talked about this—political leadership, government leadership and leadership among our police and the judiciary.

I am pleased with the recommendation that a Premier's ministerial council on domestic violence be established. That is important. Equally, much of the evidence we received pointed to the importance of leadership in police commands. Where there was strong leadership in a police command, there were much better outcomes for victims of domestic violence, reduced recidivism rates and fewer breaches of apprehended violence orders. Police leadership does not relate only to those in a command; it relates also to leadership at the top of the force and political leadership. A great deal of education is still required in that area.

The importance of domestic violence liaison officers is something that came to the fore during our inquiry. It is my hope that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the NSW Police Force will consider the committee's recommendations. It is important that steps are taken to ensure that domestic violence liaison officers are employed in each command throughout the State and that they have the resources and the status within the NSW Police Force that will ensure that they are able to carry out the job of supporting the victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence liaison officers and other police officers who respond to incidents of domestic violence must be capable of responding appropriately at the time of an offence and able to refer victims to the support organisations that are available throughout the State.

As I suspected, I will run out of time. I have not had the opportunity to speak to many of the recommendations. I hope that members take the opportunity to read this report and to support the Parliament in ensuring that the Government implements the report's recommendations.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [6.20 p.m.]: On behalf of the Christian Democratic Party I am pleased to speak on the Standing Committee on Social Issues report entitled, "Domestic violence trends and issues in NSW". As members have indicated and as the report shows, the committee has carried out valuable work in highlighting the relevant issues in New South Wales and in covering them in a comprehensive manner. The report clearly indicates the serious nature of domestic violence in New South Wales. On page 5 it states:

Domestic violence is at once a profoundly personal problem, a destructive social issue and a serious crime. As a violation of trust within people's close relationships with intimate partners and family members, domestic violence has a deeply destructive effect on victims and children.

The report estimates the cost to the economy of New South Wales as at least \$4.5 billion per year. It also states that:

Domestic violence is also a breach of the human right to freedom from gender based violence.

The "Domestic violence trends and issues in NSW" report refers to the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission and the NSW Law Reform Commission to seek to define "family violence". It states that domestic violence should be understood to cover a range of behaviours recognised as violent or threatening. On page 6 it states:

State and territory family violence legislation should provide that family violence is violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour, that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful. Such behaviour may include, but is not limited to:

- (a) physical violence;
- (b) sexual assault and other sexually abusive behaviour;
- (c) economic abuse;
- (d) emotional or psychological abuse;
- (e) stalking;
- (f) kidnapping or deprivation of liberty;
- (g) damage to property, irrespective of whether the victim owns the property;
- (h) causing injury or death to an animal, irrespective of whether the victim owns the animal; and
- (i) behaviour by the person using violence that causes a child to be exposed to the effects of behaviour referred to in (a) to (h) above.

Family or domestic violence is a comprehensive matter. It is not just simply a physical blow but can involve all the areas just outlined. The report contains some valuable statistics about domestic violence. Page 19 of the report, Table 6, Victims and offenders of domestic assaults in 2010, shows that, of female victims, the male is the offender in 61.2 per cent of cases. The percentage of cases involving female offenders is small when compared to male offenders. The graph on page 20 demonstrates that 77.2 per cent of offenders were males over 18 and 15.2 per cent were females over 18. Male offenders aged between 10 and 17 comprised 4.9 per cent with the remaining 2.8 per cent being females aged between 10 and 17. In the 18 to 24 age group, 15 per cent of offenders were male and 4 per cent were female. In the 25 to 29 age group, 13 per cent of offenders were male and 2 per cent were female. It is clear from that graph that most offenders were male.

On page 21 of the report the principal penalties issued for domestic violence offences in 2010 are listed. A figure that alarmed me was the small percentage of offenders who received a sentence of imprisonment. The report states that the penalties included a bond without supervision, 25.7 per cent; a fine, 15.1 per cent; a bond without conviction, 14.9 per cent; a bond with supervision, 14.6 per cent; and imprisonment, only 10.4 per cent. It would appear that the courts are not giving enough importance to the violence received by the female victims of domestic violence and are treating male offenders almost with kid

gloves. I believe there is a need to review the penalties for offences of domestic violence and I hope that the Attorney General will take note of the figures I have just quoted. Another area of concern to me in regard to domestic violence is taken up in the report under Recommendation No. 21, which states:

That the New South Wales Government acknowledge the link between alcohol and domestic violence and fund research to examine the role alcohol plays in the frequency, severity and effects of domestic violence.

I know from my own experience in some family situations that the main driving force in incidents of domestic violence has been alcohol. In some males alcohol can completely change their personality and turn that person into someone who uses physical violence against a female, often a husband using physical violence against his wife. My observation is that when that marriage breaks down because of the violence and the male takes up an association with another female if he stops drinking the behaviour is totally different. One would think it was a different man. I am not excusing domestic violence, but I believe alcohol plays an important role. That is why I support Recommendation No. 22, which states:

That as part of the forthcoming NSW Domestic and Family Violence Framework the NSW Government implement evidence-based initiatives to prevent alcohol related domestic violence.

The other matter I referred to is taken up in Recommendation No. 81, which states:

That the NSW Attorney General consult with the Commonwealth Attorney General to develop an effective method for information sharing between the Family Court of Australia and New South Wales courts with a view to ensuring that magistrates and judges in the New South Wales courts have the technological and legal capacity to quickly determine each case whether a party is subject to a current family law order and what the conditions of that order are.

Again, I have interviewed women who were experiencing domestic violence and the Family Court has completely ignored that violence, and even the abuse of their children and issued orders in some sort of vacuum. In one case a mother received a payment under the compensation for victims—

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate on the budget estimates proceeded with.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2012-13

Debate resumed from 18 September 2012.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA (Parliamentary Secretary) [6.30 p.m.]: New South Wales is the most populous and heavily industrialised State in Australia, with a highly urbanised population. That is why its central business district and surroundings deserve a first-class and properly functioning transport, roads, ports and maritime system. The 2012-13 State budget of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government contained a substantial \$13.2 billion investment in public transport and roads, including \$5 billion to build and maintain critical road and maritime infrastructure across New South Wales. These figures reflect entirely the priority given to improving and building transport infrastructure where it is needed. The budget provides funding for construction of the North West Rail Link and South West Rail Link—infrastructure projects the previous Government was unable or unwilling to get on with.

The budget also supports the rollout of integrated ticketing, which was promised by those opposite by the 2000 Olympics and as we all know the then Government failed to deliver. The Government will invest \$397 million in the South West Rail Link, \$360 million in the North West Rail Link and \$116 million to begin construction of the light rail extension in the inner west. It will also spend \$127 million to buy 269 new buses for Sydney. A total of \$941 million will go towards duplicating the Pacific Highway and \$187 million will be invested in continuing improvements to the Princes Highway. These are amongst various other investments that add up to the maximisation of utility for the New South Wales population.

Let us not forget that in February 2011 the Government announced that it will deliver 135 additional express and semi-express services, and it has put aside \$102 million over four years to deliver them. The Government will deliver faster travel times between Sydney's central business district and Katoomba, Penrith

and Campbelltown, as well as between the Central Coast and Macquarie Park. These changes also include 15 additional weekly services for the Illawarra. The Government has already delivered an additional 63 weekly rail services, which is a significant start. Also, additional capacity for commuters is being provided by increasing the number of carriages on selected services. This year the O'Farrell Government has announced that 41 services from Newcastle to Sydney will be built up to eight carriages, delivering nearly 20,000 new seats per week for customers travelling from Newcastle and around 33,000 new seats for Central Coast commuters.

Ferry commuters also will benefit from an additional 165 ferry services on Sydney Harbour, including 25 services on Parramatta River. These new services will go some way to restoring the ferry services that Labor slashed because it could not think of any other way to save money. Bus commuters in Sydney's north-west will also enjoy the rollout of 24 new buses and 46 new weekly bus services during peak periods. This Government is about delivering more services for more people more often. Whether it is trains, buses or ferries, the Government is about delivering more services with more frequency and with more capacity so that we actually encourage public transport use—unlike those opposite who took a knife to services across Sydney and in regional New South Wales.

To combat the problem of central business district congestion in Australia's only global city—an issue the previous Government did nothing about except pretend it did not exist—the O'Farrell Government has established the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee, which is responsible for taking a collaborative approach with the City of Sydney to come up with plans and policies that will make a real difference to those people who live, work or play in the Sydney central business district. The need to integrate transport services in the central business district is vital to ensure the best results for the State's economy and for all the people who use the city, whether they are residents, commuters, visitors or business owners. In September 2012 the O'Farrell Government released its 20-year vision project to deliver for the State a world-class public transport, road and freight network. As our Premier said:

This is a plan for the whole of New South Wales developed with the people of New South Wales and it will deliver for major cities and rural and regional areas.

The difference between us and those opposite, who in 16 years delivered 10 failed transport plans, is that we engage the community to get their input so that we get the planning right for the long haul. We have held 14 regional forums across the State, with over 1,000 participants. We have received more than 1,280 submissions—an overwhelming response. The discussion paper was downloaded 8,500 times and there were over 65,000 hits to the dedicated website, which shows that people were truly interested in taking part in the process of developing a long-term transport plan for this State.

The draft transport master plan, now released, includes more than 200 short-, medium- and long-term actions and we have allocated more than \$53 billion for transport and roads infrastructure for the next four years, for those who complain it is unfunded—\$53 billion over four years. This is a 20-year transport plan. We will be delivering properly planned infrastructure for the people of New South Wales. Not only are we working hard today to produce immediate outcomes for our customers, but also we are looking to the future so that our decisions continue to benefit generations to come. The draft plan builds on Sydney's Rail Future, which includes the North West Rail Link and South West Rail Link, a second harbour rail crossing and a new central business district line, providing the foundation for 60 per cent more trains in the peak. All that will deliver an integrated public transport network for greater Sydney and essential links for regional areas. We have listened to what the citizens of New South Wales had to say through extensive consultation and have produced the draft transport master plan accordingly.

Highlights of the draft transport master plan include a complete modernisation of the metropolitan rail network, more frequent services, faster travel times, a redesign of the city's bus network to a highly integrated network with more choice and more frequent services, a shift towards light rail for busier corridors, a long-term plan to complete critical links in Sydney's motorway network, a Barangaroo ferry plan that will improve ferry services to the central business district, a new integrated electronic ticketing system, new ferries, trains and buses, investing in the cycling network around Sydney's urban centres and the central business district, improved pedestrian infrastructure, major highway upgrades, establishment of NSW Trains and the development of country passenger rail services, better bus services for regional towns and growing regional cities, upgrades to major roads in growing regional centres, and a new 10-year road safety strategy with a major emphasis on reducing fatalities and injuries on country roads.

The Government is continuing its significant investment in roads infrastructure throughout the State. The O'Farrell Government has delivered \$5 billion for roads. This level of investment is more than any Labor

Government delivered. As part of our commitment to the Princes Highway, this year's budget provides \$100 million for the long-awaited upgrade of the highway between Gerringong and Bomaderry—a project promised by Labor in 2006 but it failed to deliver a single inch of widening works. We are also delivering \$28 million to continue the construction of the Princes Highway duplication at South Nowra. These are major regional links and we have made it clear that we will be delivering unprecedented funding to these regions.

The Illawarra is a vital region, and the New South Wales Government is determined to provide essential infrastructure to support its continuous growth, which is why more than \$164 million will be invested in Illawarra roads as part of the 2012-13 State budget. This represents a \$61 million, or 60 per cent, increase on last year's allocation. This is yet another example of New South Wales Liberals and Nationals getting on with the job and delivering our election commitments. As part of the 2012-13 State budget the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government will invest a total of \$5 billion to build and maintain critical roads and maritime infrastructure across the State. This will include \$2.2 billion for new roads, \$1.3 billion for maintenance of the State's existing roads, \$311 million for improvements to the traffic network, \$270 million for road safety and \$17 million for commuter wharf upgrades.

The New South Wales Liberal Party and The Nationals made a clear election commitment to deliver an additional \$200 million over four years to improve safety and reduce congestion. Key projects include the upgrading of Lakes Way, Ocean Drive, Manilla Road, Woy Woy Road, Narellan Road and Werrington arterial; overtaking lanes on the Newell, Monaro and Oxley highways; and safety upgrades on Picton Road and Wisemans Ferry Road. I am proud to say that the New South Wales Roads Minister, the Hon. Duncan Gay, has announced a \$40 million investment in roads across the St George and Sutherland region as part of the 2012-13 State budget. Key funding for the region includes \$20.9 million to maintain existing road infrastructure, \$1.7 million for road safety initiatives, \$9.6 million to improve the traffic network and \$366,000 for routine and minor maritime work. A significant \$83 million will also be invested in roads in the Macarthur region as part of the 2012-13 State budget.

The New South Wales Government will continue to build essential infrastructure, invest in roads and deliver first-class transport. The Government has created the Freight and Regional Development Division at Transport for NSW to be the interface for the freight industry, coordinating key freight system components such as road, rail, ports and intermodal terminals. As part of this work, it is developing a long-term integrated strategic plan for the freight and ports sector. As part of the Government's commitment to consultation, the Freight and Regional Development Division has held more than 30 meetings with customers across the State and will continue its intensive customer consultation program. This will allow communities such as Griffith, Deniliquin and Casino to have a say in what the Government plans to do to support the freight and logistics industry. The New South Wales freight and ports strategy will be released later this year.

In relation to the State's maritime services, the New South Wales Government is determined to deliver improved services and capabilities for waterways users and to reduce red tape to encourage investment in the boating industry in New South Wales. A maritime policy agenda has been designed with the purpose to guide the maritime-related work of Transport for NSW over the next three years. In New South Wales, more than 1.5 million people go boating each year, which makes the safe use of our waterways a key priority for the Government. Over the past 10 years, 175 lives have been lost in boating incidents in New South Wales. While the overall trend and the fatality rate is improving, there is still a lot of work to do—175 lives lost is 175 too many. Boat ownership is forecast to increase at almost 3 per cent a year in New South Wales, and that is creating a challenge in the availability of vessel storage and access to our waterways. We will therefore be focusing on delivering new and improved vessel storage solutions and access to waterways statewide.

Industry feedback has also suggested a frustration with some maritime regulations and policy, which is why we will review processes and work to deliver improvements in efficiency and responsiveness, especially in the maritime property area. The New South Wales Government's Maritime Policy Agenda includes 16 specific actions to reduce red tape, improve boating safety and improve access to waterways and maritime infrastructure. The majority of these actions will be carried out by Roads and Maritime Services and the Office of Boating Safety and Maritime Affairs in Transport for NSW over the next two to three years. All of these investments and strategies by the New South Wales Government aim to improve the transport, roads and maritime infrastructure across the State. After 16 years of Labor neglect, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is determined to create an integrated transport network that supports the State's growing economy. One has only to compare the actions of the O'Farrell Government over the past 18 months with the complete inaction of the Labor Government over the past 16 years to see that this Government is taking appropriate and necessary action to return New South Wales to its number one position.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ [6.45 p.m.]: Apparently building the South West Rail Link will move New South Wales forward. I have bad news: It was already being built and was funded under the previous Government. As to this Government's claim that it will deliver the North West Rail Link, it has already rolled back where the rail line will go. The Government promised that the line would connect with the city but now it is going to end at Epping, Chatswood or somewhere else. We do not know whether there will be single-deck or double-deck trains and whether they will be part of the existing system or people will have to transfer. The reality is that it is just another transport announcement. A further good example is the Government's announcement that Parramatta Road is to be an open-cut road with a freeway running beneath it. I will bet \$1,000 that that plan never comes to fruition. I have seen any number of plans for Parramatta Road.

The Hon. Marie Ficarra: We will be coming to collect.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: I am glad that the Hon. Marie Ficarra has taken me up on it. I have seen plans put on display and I guarantee that a plan to make Parramatta Road an open-cut road will not happen. It would be interesting to compare that plan with the 2002-03 master plan, which had a tunnel linking the M4 to the Anzac Bridge, and see how traffic will be managed at either end of the extensions. Those who, like me, live around Bardwell Park and deal regularly with the M5 and airport traffic when travelling to the city, will be familiar with the heavy vehicle movements in the area, particularly on a Sunday morning. If one looks—as I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary would like to—at where the original plan put the heavy traffic and compare it with this plan, one can see where the traffic clogs will occur.

Plan after plan has been put on display. If one proposes a plan that does not show where the traffic will go, that does not link up with the Western Distributor, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Anzac Bridge or the Cross City Tunnel, and run it into the airport then one is going to clog the system. I will bet \$1,000 that the plan to make Parramatta Road an open-cut road that somehow ends in the city, with other roads running alongside it and no additional infrastructure, will never happen. I turn to a number of issues concerning smaller agencies as many of my parliamentary colleagues have dealt extensively with the \$1.7 billion cut to education and the cuts to the health system—

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: There are no cuts to the health system.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: That is a good one. I will deal particularly with what is happening in Sport and Recreation. Some Sport and Recreation programs that have been funded for many years by the New South Wales Government have had their funding cut. I know members opposite who also support these organisations probably are not aware that organisations such as Kidsafe NSW have had their funding cut by the O'Farrell Government. Kidsafe NSW promotes playground safety. It provides a playground inspection service and promotes safety in backyards. It also has an indoor and outdoor water safety program. The Government has also cut the very small amount that it contributes to the Lloyd McDermott Aboriginal development squads and the Johnny Warren Football Foundation, which do not qualify for funding from any other source. Those organisations link soccer and rugby union with school and work to achieve improved health outcomes and they make a real difference to people's lives.

The Lloyd McDermott squads receive only \$50,000 from NSW Sport and Recreation, and that is peanuts given the work they do. I was at Coffs Harbour for the Ella Sevens rugby tournament when the Lloyd McDermott representatives conducted diabetes tests and workshops on better eating in Aboriginal communities. I played sport with girls who travelled from Coonamble, Darwin, Alice Springs, Bourke and Moree. Women—most of whom have children—came from far and wide to participate in the tournament. It is one of the few opportunities they have to be involved in a sporting organisation. One of the Alice Springs participants, who travelled to the event by herself, said that she had seen it advertised on NITV. She had always dreamed of being at the Ella Sevens and she played with the Coonamble team because it was short a couple of players. For participants like that woman, competing at the Ella Sevens as a member of a Lloyd McDermott squad is life changing. They are supported in their involvement in sport and enjoy better health outcomes as a result.

The Jack Newton Junior Golf organisation runs tournaments for young people in Kurri Kurri, Maitland and Goulburn. Not too many people think golf is important and the organisation receives a relatively small amount of funding. But it is said that those who play golf when they are young will play it for life. The Auditor-General reported on the lack of involvement in sport by many schoolchildren in this State. Jack Newton Junior Golf has entered into a partnership with the Department of Education and Communities to run golf programs in primary and secondary schools. Many children do not want to play rugby or other team sports and golf is an important option for them. In light of that, cutting the funding is reprehensible. The Flying Fruit Fly Circus has also had its funding cut, as have a number of other organisations.

The Government's funding cuts in the arts sector are very concerning. Of particular concern is the reduction in the Screen NSW investment fund. The Labor Government allocated an additional \$5 million annually to the screen investment fund, but the new Government—one of whose Ministers describes himself as "Minister Hollywood"—has reduced that to \$3.5 million. When producers are deciding where to make a film they look at the funding that is available. The budget cut that the Government has imposed means that film producers will look elsewhere for locations and that will have a huge impact on the local film industry. The changes to the budget for the Parramatta arts precinct are also very worrying.

Minister Souris said that the Government is reviewing the precinct. He was quoted in the 7 September edition of the *Sydney Morning Herald* as saying that the Government will be reassessing all options. It came as a big surprise to local residents, particularly to those who have been fighting for the precinct, to read in the State Property Authority newsletter *Tenant Talk* that the authority has taken over management of the Parramatta jail site and is preparing it for sale. The Minister does not seem to think the sale will have any impact on his assessment of the options.

The Hon. Scot MacDonald: Good member.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: He might be a good member, but we have not heard his views about the arts precinct. The people who have been fighting for the precinct are concerned that the Government is selling off assets that have been identified as important to the precinct. Those involved with the Newcastle Regional Art Gallery and the Albury Regional Art Gallery are also very concerned about the cuts to their budgets. The member for Newcastle, Tim Owen, committed to obtaining an additional \$7 million for his local gallery. Despite that, the Minister said that no funding will be provided for either gallery. That is extremely distressing for the residents of Newcastle given that the Federal Government and Newcastle City Council have both committed \$7 million. Based on the comments of the member for Newcastle, there were high hopes that the local art gallery would also receive funding from the New South Wales Government, but that was not to be.

We should not be surprised about this Government's attitude to the arts because it has scrapped fine arts courses from the TAFE curriculum. Arts students at the Great Lakes campus of the North Coast TAFE in Forster-Tuncurry and TAFE campuses further north can kiss their courses goodbye. Those courses were part of a significant strategy designed to encourage the development of a creative arts industry, particularly in areas with low employment and high tourism, but the Minister has scrapped that funding. When we asked the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts questions about these issues he did not appear to have a view about fine arts. The Hon. George Souris claims he is the greatest arts advocate since 1995. If he wants to be an arts advocate he should ensure that the Government does not take money from the film industry. He should also give the money to regional art galleries that the Government said it would provide. He should be protecting fine arts courses at TAFE colleges.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY (Parliamentary Secretary) [6.58 p.m.]: It is an honour to contribute to this debate on the budget presented in June by the O'Farrell-Stoner Government. I will deal with those parts of the budget that address the Health portfolio. A world-class health system needs world-class hospitals and health facilities. That is why the New South Wales Government delivered on its commitment to rebuild the State's declining health system and handed down a record health budget and unprecedented investment in capital works, particularly in the regions. Investment in infrastructure in the health policy area includes hospitals, health facilities, medical equipment and health technology as well as clinical and operational information communications systems to better support the delivery of effective health care to the people of New South Wales. Infrastructure investment also contributes to achieving key health-related goals for this Government. It is the Government's goal to keep people healthy and out of hospital and to provide world-class clinical services with timely access to facilities and services no matter where they live in this State.

An extra \$1 billion will be invested in the New South Wales health sector this year. The 5.4 per cent increase will bring the budget up to \$18.3 billion—the largest single component of the New South Wales budget and 27 per cent of total government expenditure. NSW Health employs nearly 125,000 people in 227 public hospitals and other health services. On a typical day for NSW Health nearly 6,000 patients arrive at hospital emergency departments seeking treatment, more than 4,500 people are admitted as inpatients, there are 14,700 people in hospital beds of whom nearly half are aged over 65, staff will perform more than 500 surgical procedures, ambulances will respond to a 000 call every 27 seconds, and \$50 million will be spent. That happens every day—all 365 of them.

The record investment in public health will provide for an extra 50,000 emergency department presentations, 30,000 more acute in-patient services and 2,000 more elective surgeries. This Government has not

taken regional New South Wales for granted. By substantially increasing its investment in country infrastructure it has also attracted a greater share of funds from the Commonwealth health and hospital funds, securing 39 per cent of the national health and hospital funding in the past two rounds and leading to a population share for New South Wales of 32 per cent.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted to permit a motion to adjourn the House if desired.

The House continued to sit.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: The New South Wales Government has committed \$25.6 million in planning funds for the Maitland Hospital, the Northern Beaches hospital and the Health and Hospitals Fund projects including: the Kempsey hospital, \$40 million from New South Wales with \$40 million from the Health and Hospital Fund; the Lismore Base Hospital, \$20 million from New South Wales with \$60 million from the Health and Hospital Fund; the Yamba Community Health Centre, \$1.2 million from New South Wales with \$4.3 million from the Health and Hospital Fund; the Hillston Multipurpose Service, \$6 million from New South Wales with \$6 million from the Health and Hospital Fund; and the Peak Hill Multipurpose Service, \$6 million from New South Wales with \$6 million from the Health and Hospital Fund.

Other rural and regional capital projects that this Government committed to prior to the last election and has delivered include the Dubbo hospital at a total cost of \$80 million with a 2012-13 allocation of \$12,541 million—the Premier dug the first sod at that site last week; Port Macquarie with a 2012-13 allocation of \$10,669 at a total cost of the project at \$110 million; Wagga Wagga with a 2012-13 allocation of \$28,771 and at a total cost of \$270 million for a long overdue project that is desperately needed in the Riverina; the Cessnock hospital's emergency department upgrade at a cost of \$1.5 million; the Bega hospital, with the New South Wales Government contributing \$6.8 million; Parkes and Forbes, at a cost of \$2.3 million for planning this year; and an amount of \$17.7 million for the \$220 million Tamworth stage two redevelopment. Under the Resources for the Regions program, the Muswellbrook Hospital received \$4.4 million to upgrade its emergency department.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: It should have been funded from Health Capital Works not Resources for Regions.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Is the Hon. Mick Veitch against funding for Muswellbrook? I cannot believe a member of Country Labor would be against funding for the Muswellbrook Hospital. The budget also provides for \$6.1 million in infrastructure funding for the Ambulance Service of New South Wales, including planning funds for new ambulance stations at Albury, Bega and Wagga Wagga, the ambulance radio network and new medical and information and technology equipment. Additional funding has been allocated to improve intensive care services, with both adults and children benefitting. An amount of \$5.6 million has been provided for adult intensive care services at Gosford, Prince of Wales, Nepean and Liverpool hospitals; \$1.4 million has been provided for the Sydney Children's Hospital network—which is attended by many children from regional New South Wales—to enhance paediatric care services and improve critical care services for children; and \$2.8 million has been provided for additional neonatal intensive care services at the John Hunter Children's and Westmead hospitals. I know that the John Hunter Children's neonatal intensive care service is incredible and delivers amazing outcomes for the northern part of New South Wales, as well as for the Hunter.

An extra \$42 million will provide for further subacute services for general rehabilitation, palliative care and mental health under the third year of the Council of Australian Governments National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services. Chronic pain costs the Australian economy \$34 billion annually and is the nation's third most costly health problem. Earlier this year Minister Skinner launched the New South Wales Pain Management Plan to provide a blueprint for developing pain management services across the State and delivering, providing and planning for future health needs. The plan commits an additional \$26 million over the next four years, with \$5 million allocated for this year. Palliative care also has been enhanced with a \$5 million boost to services and \$1 million for additional cochlear implants, predominantly for children. This budget builds on the important work already achieved in relation to boosting the number of health professionals working within the health system, with more than 2,475 nurses and midwives employed in the first term and 1,000 additional nurses now working across rural and regional local health districts.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

LAW ENFORCEMENT (POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES) AMENDMENT (KINGS CROSS AND RAILWAYS DRUG DETECTION) BILL 2012

STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Bills received from the Legislative Assembly.

Leave granted for procedural matters to be dealt with on one motion without formality.

Motion by the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox agreed to:

That the bills be read a first time and printed, standing orders be suspended on contingent notice for remaining stages and the second readings of the bills be set down as orders of the day for the next sitting day.

Bills read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Second readings set down as orders of the day for a future day.

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX (Parliamentary Secretary) [7.06 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

STATE FINANCES

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD [7.06 p.m.]: As the Liberal-Nationals Government makes the difficult reforms to public administration and expenditure, the Labor Opposition continually interjects with protestations that it ran surpluses. Whether it is capping public sector wages, reducing the size of the public service, changes to the police death and disability scheme or cuts to education funding, the Labor Party resists and trots out the line that the changes are not necessary and that when it was in government it was a brilliant financial manager. The depth of dishonesty is breathtaking. The surpluses were, of course, David Copperfield-type figures. In its last term the Labor Government allowed the total State sector debt to double from \$21.77 billion to \$42.58 billion. Any charlatan can proclaim a surplus if he is maxing out the credit card. The debt will trend down and it was \$40 billion as at the end of June this year. In December 2010, Premier Kennelly and her finance Minister, Michael Daly, MP, boasted that the forecast for debt by now was to be \$47 billion. Our Government's tough but necessary decisions have reined in the debt by \$7 billion.

It is same old, same old—the Labor Party raids the Treasury coffers and the Liberal-Nationals repair the damage. Some of the most startling figures and comparisons of this Government and the previous Government relate to the expenditure discipline. Labor had none. For its entire period in office it failed to bring expenses in on budget. If it had, this State would be \$20 billion better off. All members could imagine the good that could have been done with those funds. We could pay down debt, build infrastructure, reduce the taxation burden or put more police on the street. Again, in sharp contrast, this Government has met its expenditure projections.

When the Hon. Steve Whan replies, "We left you with surpluses", we know he is one of the financial illiterates of the Labor Party. Its surpluses included Federal stimulus funds and a range of program fudging. Stripped of these abnormal items, the Labor Party ran deficits from 2008-09. This Government is confronting unprecedented revenue declines. This is in sharp contrast with the previous Government, which enjoyed years of income growth—much of which was wasted. For the first time GST revenue is softening. New South Wales is projected to receive \$5.20 billion less in GST receipts. This Government has a simple choice: manage the State's finances sustainably or shift the problem to future generations. We are choosing to live within our means. That entails a lot of difficult, unpopular decisions. But I believe our strategy is understood and supported by the vast majority of the people of New South Wales.

Business confidence is recovering above the levels of the previous Government and the State's unemployment rate has moved from the bottom of the country's performance to near the top. We are in a strong position to retain the State's triple-A credit rating. Almost certainly our rating would have been downgraded without regime change and would have cost the State an extra \$375 million each year. There is still much work

to be done. The Government is honouring its infrastructure promises. For the first time our capital works are being planned and prioritised for the long term, not the 24-hour news cycle. With the right transport linkages, our ports and airports once again will be the economic driver that they should be.

Since coal was discovered and exported in 1797, this State has been heavily reliant on the resources sector. The Strategic Regional Land Use Policy will ensure that our minerals and gas will be accessible but extracted in a fair and safe manner. The previous State Government had been asleep at the wheel and Queensland stole the march on us. The Gladstone gas export facility is injecting \$50 billion into that State's economy together with thousands of jobs. In the same period, New South Wales created a few hundred jobs, lost gas dependent industries and did not develop an export industry. It compounded its sins by failing to regulate to protect the environment and be fair to landholders. Labor took the money from the explorers and asked very few questions.

Lack of scrutiny is the hallmark of a desperate and ill-disciplined government. The previous Labor Government knew that it could not control its expenses and it knew that the State's debt was ballooning to nearly two-thirds of the annual budget. It grasped at shoddy property, mining and gas deals. The contrast with the Liberal-Nationals Government could not be greater. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has financial discipline, economically efficient long-term infrastructure commitments, ethical planning controls and is devolving health and education responsibility to communities. It is putting the force back into the NSW Police Force and getting government out of the lives of people where it is not needed. The Hon. Steve Whan proclaims, "But we left you with surpluses", but the former Labor Government's budget was built on quicksand, was destined for profound failure and would have cost future generations dearly.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

The Hon. MICK VEITCH [7.11 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about the recently released Infrastructure NSW report entitled "First things First: The State Infrastructure Strategy 2012-2032."

The Hon. Rick Colless: Why do you not congratulate the Government on preparing the report?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: We have been told endlessly over the past few weeks that the Government did not prepare the report; it was prepared by an independent body. There has been a lot of public analysing of the report and we are awaiting the Government's full response to its recommendations. I, like many in this Chamber I suspect, have read the report through somewhat biased eyes—namely, rural and regional eyes. Chapter 5, which relates to regional New South Wales, and chapter 10, which deals with regional and interstate transport, were of particular interest to me. Government members often remark that Opposition members, when in government, neglected regional infrastructure. I quote from page 30 of the Greiner report which clearly states:

Regional NSW has extensive and well developed regional road and rail networks connecting population and employment centres across the State. In recent years, the NSW State and Commonwealth Governments have undertaken major investment to improve the quality and capacity of these networks.

My interpretation of that quote is that money has been spent on infrastructure in rural and regional New South Wales. However, I am not the only one concerned about this report. Councillor Stuart Freudenstein, the mayor of Young, is quoted in yesterday's edition of the *Young Witness* as saying:

"It is titled First Things First and is unashamedly incremental in its approach", he said, "it may be the case that regional NSW is again last."

"Of the 70 recommendations in the report only one is specifically away from the coast" said Mr Freudenstein.

Councillor Freudenstein referred to the report as being very "metro-centric". In a further criticism of the report relating to road maintenance, in the same media report, Councillor Freudenstein is reported as saying:

"In another section of the strategy it suggests a solution to the road funding gap on local roads would be bundling of road maintenance and renewal procurement", Mr Freudenstein said.

"This shows a complete lack of understanding of the problem, efficiency gains are never going to make up the gap between what is needed to fix our roads and what is currently on the table", he said.

It is well known that I hold a great deal of concern about road maintenance contracts and the Government's plans for them in the future. The Government needs to give clear direction about the future of road maintenance contracts, particularly in regional and rural New South Wales. Councillor Freudenstein is not the only country mayor voicing concern about road maintenance funding; others are on the public record as having the same concerns.

The Infrastructure NSW report also raises concerns about the long-term future of CountryLink services, particularly rail as opposed to coach services. It is my long-held view that the government of the day, regardless of which party is in office, has an obligation to ensure affordable public transport services are available for the residents of rural and regional New South Wales. Not everyone has a motor vehicle, nor can everyone afford to fly. Indeed, not all regional and rural residents have access to an airport, as the Hon. Rick Colless would know. I am convinced that the Maldon to Dombarton rail line needs to be completed and opened. It will prove to be crucial infrastructure for the transportation of freight from central, western and southern New South Wales for years to come. This critical infrastructure has received attention in the Infrastructure NSW report but it is only slated for construction on a user-funding model. I share the concern of many in rural and regional New South Wales that the report is, indeed, very metro-centric and that many people in rural and regional New South Wales will be duded in the long run. We will wait and see.

NATIONAL PARKS AND TOURISM

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK [7.15 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about nature-based tourism developments in national parks. I note that The Greens are actively against this but The Greens are not always right on matters of the environment and how best to run national parks. The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission recently released its report on that State's tourism industry and significantly, in my opinion, recommended tourism development in national parks. The Victorian Government apparently has accepted all the commission's recommendations, including that private sector investment and business will be allowed to "propose sensible and sensitive developments in national parks, provided they complement environmental, heritage and other values and generate a net public benefit". In an effort to speed up such developments, the Victorian Government will "reform current policy to allow appropriate environmentally sensitive, private sector tourism investment in national parks".

The concern for New South Wales is that Victorian Treasurer Kim Wells has conceded that if Victoria hopes to attract more international visitors, particularly from markets such as China, it needs to meet the rapidly growing demand for nature-based tourism. I fear that New South Wales will risk missing the boat on this goldmine of international visitors if it does not keep up with the main game. We are told that nearly 40 million people visit our national parks each year, although I suggest that the figures cannot be verified as being anywhere near accurate. We are told that they are estimates only, with no real basis in fact. We need to make sure that any increase in this nature-based tourism from places like China also benefits New South Wales. On the one hand, Victorian tourism advocacy groups rightly argue that tourism in national parks is good for conservation and good for business "because it lets those best at running commercial enterprises focus on that while the national park agencies can return to managing the conservation elements".

On the other hand, and not at all surprisingly, the Victorian arm of that auspicious group, the National Parks Association, is opposing the Government move in the same way that the New South Wales branch opposes anything that the New South Wales Government wants to do in national parks. It is concerned about the conflicting values of conservation and commercialism, except when it wishes commercially to exploit national parks by fundraising through scare campaigns. The two are not mutually exclusive but the National Parks Association wants things done its way or not at all—preferably not at all. Why can commercial businesses not contribute positively to the environment? Surely the checks and balances of this modern age will provide a win-win situation.

What does the National Parks Association have to say about the development in Tasmania called Cradle Mountain Lodges, which is in a high environmental value area and is successful from a business and environmental perspective? Tourists travelling from around Australia, and indeed from around the world, pay for the experience of tourism developments in that Tasmanian national park. That is not a new concept but obviously one that the National Parks Association will never accept. Surely we are now mature enough to be at the point where each proposed development or activity in our national parks can be assessed on its own merits and then, with full examination and exposure, be either approved or rejected.

Let us get the process started. Neither The Greens nor the National Parks Association runs New South Wales any longer. This Government has a marvellous opportunity to get things done. Nature-based tourism developments in our national parks should be a no brainer for all. I am willing to bet that should the Government advertise for expressions of interest it will almost be knocked over in the rush. The Shooters and Fishers Party stands ready to help the Government get this great initiative up and running—the sooner the better.

INDONESIAN LANGUAGE STUDIES

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY (Leader of the Opposition) [7.20 p.m.]: Speaking about the bilateral relationship between Australia and Indonesia in 1994, Prime Minister Paul Keating said:

No country is more important to Australia than Indonesia. If we fail to get this relationship right, and nurture and develop it, the whole web of our foreign relations is incomplete.

Paul Keating was right. We must continue to nurture and develop our relationship with Indonesia, the third largest democracy in the world, our close neighbour and home to 240 million people. Professor David F. Hill told us in his important report entitled "Indonesian Language in Australian Universities: Strategies for a stronger future", published in April this year that the number of Australians learning to speak Indonesian is "a quantifiable measure of Australians' interest in, knowledge of and engagement with Indonesia". Professor Hill is Chair of Southeast Asian Studies at Murdoch University in Western Australia. His report makes for sobering reading. He found that Indonesian language learning in Australian education is in crisis.

More year 12 students were studying Indonesian in 1972 than were doing so in 2009. Since 2001 school enrolments in Indonesian programs across the country have been declining by at least 10,000 each year. The number of students learning Indonesian at primary and secondary levels in public schools across New South Wales has declined steeply. In 1996, 44,973 students were undertaking Indonesian language studies in New South Wales schools. In 2011 that number was down to 6,029 students. The NSW Department of Education has recently taken a decision to axe the Indonesian curriculum support officer for schools. In universities, enrolments in Indonesian fell by 37 per cent nationally in the decade to 2010 and by 52 per cent in New South Wales universities.

Professor Hill's report found that in many cases a single tenured staff member is responsible for providing Indonesian language instruction across three, and often four, year levels. Such staffing levels make a program highly vulnerable. In 2004 the Indonesian language programs at both the University of Technology, Sydney and the University of Western Sydney were closed. The University of New South Wales recently announced that it will close its Indonesian language program from next year. This will leave the University of Sydney as the only tertiary institution to offer Indonesian language courses.

As a member of the New South Wales Parliament, I want to support the teaching and learning of the Indonesian language at all levels of the education system in this State. "Indonesian Language in Australian Universities: Strategies for a stronger future" recommends specific strategies for the strengthening of Indonesian language courses in Australian educational institutions. It proposes a national Indonesian language in universities program and provides 20 specific recommendations. It recommends that Federal, State and Territory governments, through the Ministers of Education, establish a national task force on Indonesian language. This task force would coordinate, advocate for, promote and stimulate Indonesian language teaching and learning across all sectors of the education system. It would oversee and coordinate the implementation of the national Indonesian language in universities program. Australia's Foreign Minister, Bob Carr, is actively pursuing better relations with Indonesia. In July he said:

I want to levitate the Australia-Indonesia relationship above these regular transactional issues of people smuggling, live cattle exports and Australians who are charged with drug offences. Our relationship with this most populous and important of our neighbours—it's about far more than those occasional irritant issues.

After Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono addressed the Commonwealth Parliament in 2010 then Prime Minister Rudd said:

We are neighbours by circumstance, but we are friends because we have chosen to be friends.

It is not an easy relationship. As former foreign Minister Gareth Evans once put it:

No two neighbours anywhere in the world are as different, in terms of history, culture, population, language, and political and social traditions, as Australia and Indonesia.

This relationship requires Australians with the linguistic, cultural and social knowledge to communicate with our Indonesian counterparts. If we cannot understand our near neighbour's language, how can we hope to fully understand that neighbour? I urge the New South Wales Government, and all Australian governments, to study the findings and act on the recommendations of "Indonesian Language in Australian Universities: Strategies for a stronger future."

TRIBUTE TO PAUL HOPKINS AND BERKELEY WILES

The Hon. JAN BARHAM [7.25 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about two inspirational conservationists who passed away recently. They are Paul Hopkins and Berkeley Wiles, both from the northern rivers area. I acknowledge their extraordinary contributions and legacies. Paul Hopkins, known as Hop.E, was the founding coordinator of the Tweed's Caldera Environment Centre, formed to raise awareness in the community of the region's biodiversity and wonderful natural assets. He spent almost 40 years on the Tweed, where he lived after moving from Sydney. As a trained architect, he was part of the team that designed the Sydney Opera House under Joern Utzon, and then resigned in protest at the treatment of Mr Utzon by the Government. With the help of a new generation of environmentalists, from his home in Tyalgum, Paul secured preservation of the Tweed's unique environment that was constantly under threat from overdevelopment.

Paul was focused on the recognition of the Tweed Caldera as an internationally significant ecological site, identified as a Biosphere under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]. This important process to gain identification of the region's biodiversity is being continued, with the application for listing currently being finalised by Caldera Environment Centre volunteers. Hop.E and others campaigned strongly and achieved national park status for Wollumbin, also known as Mount Warning. He also led the campaign to prevent a retirement village being built on top of Mount Nullum—a campaign that led to the creation of scenic escarpment protection laws. Paul also worked on the link between acid sulphate soils and development, which led to a commission of inquiry into acid sulphate soils. More recently he worked on submissions to minimise the environmental impacts of the Cobaki and Kings Forest subdivisions. Paul Hop.E Hopkins is survived by his partner, Cynthia Brook, and children Nick, Tom and Thea.

Berkeley Wiles was born in Sydney in 1941 and became a journalist. He worked in London and subsequently hitchhiked more than 21,000 kilometres through 27 countries in Europe and the Middle East. It was on his return trip to London that he met a childhood friend, Margaret Lawrence. He returned to Sydney in 1967. On Margaret's return they married in 1969 and later bought a small property at Eureka near Byron Bay, which included 1.2 hectares of original big scrub. While regenerating the rainforest at Eureka, he worked part time for the National Parks and Wildlife Service in Lismore and was a founding member of the Big Scrub Rainforests Landcare Group.

Berkeley was a conservationist who played a central role in the expansion of national parks in the 1980s. As the public relations and media officer for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service for 20 years from 1974 he managed successfully to walk the line between the message of preserving the values of national parks and maintaining the peace with other government departments, including the New South Wales Forestry Commission, which was supporting the millers and loggers. Berkeley was always polite, even in 1979 when loggers and conservationists confronted each other at Terania Creek near Lismore. Logging was suspended largely due to a very successful media campaign. Subsequently, five large coastal ranges rainforests were preserved and later declared World Heritage sites by the United Nations Environment Commission.

As a trusted voice for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Berkeley was instrumental in persuading the State Government that national parks were vital to the preservation of native vegetation and wildlife, as well as providing an ongoing economic benefit from tourism. Unfortunately a brain tumour forced Berkeley to retire at 52; then he and Margaret moved back to Byron Bay and became part of my local community. It was always a pleasure to see them at community events and both Berkeley and Margaret maintained a strong interest in local issues and support for the local commitment to ecological protection. Berkeley is survived by his wife, Margaret, and children, James and Emily, as well as extended family. These two people are not typical conservationists, as often portrayed by the media or in this House. They were truly inspirational members of the community who worked effectively throughout their lives to preserve the environments that they loved.

NATIONAL NO INTEREST LOANS SCHEME CONFERENCE

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA (Parliamentary Secretary) [7.30 p.m.]: It was a great honour to represent the Premier, the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, and the Minister for Fair Trading, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, at Darling Harbour on 7 June for the 2012 National No Interest Loans Scheme [NILS] Conference. I congratulate the Good Shepherd family for their outstanding work with the National No Interest Loans Scheme and offer my congratulations to the Microfinance inaugural chair, Ms Christine Nixon, past Victorian Chief Police Commissioner from 2001 to 2009, and the chief executive officer, Mr Adam Mooney, formerly from Reconciliation Australia.

I pay tribute to and thank the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Since their arrival in Australia in 1863 they have worked tirelessly on a range of initiatives to help those marginalised in our society, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of women and children. In 1981 the sisters saw the need to help those on low incomes to gain access to safe and affordable credit and established the first No Interest Loan Scheme in the inner Melbourne suburb of Collingwood. This wonderful program assists clients in the purchase of white goods and other essential household items that would normally be beyond their capacity to finance. From modest beginnings 31 years ago, the National No Interest Loans Scheme is now available throughout Australia through more than 400 outlets. Last year it delivered more than 15,000 affordable loans, usually up to a maximum of \$1,200, to individuals and families on low incomes.

I acknowledge the support of the National No Interest Loans Scheme by the National Australia Bank. The bank has teamed up with the Federal Government and with the New South Wales Government. Through the Office of Fair Trading New South Wales has delivered more loans than any other State. Last year the National No Interest Loans Scheme in New South Wales was responsible for 5,525 loans. This is a significant year for the National No Interest Loans Scheme, with the establishment of Good Shepherd Microfinance as an independent agency. This agency will focus its energies to further promote the National No Interest Loans Scheme and other Good Shepherd Microfinance services to those in need.

The objectives and the mission of the National No Interest Loans Scheme are closely aligned with *NSW 2021: A plan to make NSW number one*. This is a 10-year plan to rebuild the economy, return and grow quality service provision and to strengthen our local environment and communities. *NSW 2021* sets as an important goal:

To better protect the most vulnerable members of our community and break the cycle of disadvantage.

Under this priority, we are focused on prevention and early intervention, working with non-government organisations to deliver community services, care, accommodation and other support mechanisms, to prevent problems from escalating and becoming entrenched. It is important to acknowledge the significant role that schemes such as the National No Interest Loans Scheme play in the ongoing fight to help people break out of the poverty cycle with all of its associated debilitating physical, social and mental implications that go beyond one generation. The New South Wales Government is pleased to have a role in the delivery of the National No Interest Loans Scheme to our community, to assist disadvantaged members of our community in achieving their rightful financial inclusion—that is, to give people the leg up they need to participate in the economy and to invest in the future for themselves and their families.

The New South Wales Government has been a supporter of the National No Interest Loans Scheme since 2008, when NSW Fair Trading committed funding of \$840,000 under its community grants program. The following year this funding was more than doubled to \$1.74 million. I am pleased to say that in the last financial year the New South Wales Government provided more than \$2.18 million to the service. This funding supports the employment of a National No Interest Loans Scheme New South Wales State coordinator and workers in local community organisations. It supports 58 organisations across New South Wales, enabling the employment of more than 80 National No Interest Loans Scheme workers.

In the last financial year this funding helped the National No Interest Loans Scheme to provide more than 5,500 loans to low income earners, totalling more than \$4 million in New South Wales. This level of achievement would not be possible without the generosity of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the staff at Good Shepherd Microfinance, governments and corporate partners who contribute loan capital, the local non-government organisations that deliver the National No Interest Loans Scheme to the community and especially the National No Interest Loans Scheme workers on the ground, many of whom volunteer their time and skills. I congratulate all those involved in the scheme and thank them all for their dedication and tireless work in delivering the National No Interest Loans Scheme across Australia and in dispelling the myth that low income earners cannot manage a budget. All those involved are making a solid contribution to our mutual social inclusion agenda and building important economic foundations for our State.

Question—That this House do now adjourn—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.35 p.m. until Tuesday 17 October 2012 at 11.00 a.m.
